A new "HERBERT WEST" story by H. P. LOVECRAFT

SEPTEMBER

Weird Tales

15¢

FRANK OWEN
SEABURY QUINN

The most famous sorceress in three continents and four dimensions deals darkly in . . . . . .

BLACK BARTER
By Robert Bloch

Missing
Inside
Front
Cover

How to Make YOUR Body Bring You FAME

... Instead of SHAME!

ARE YOU Skinny? Weak? Flabby?

Will You Let Me Prove I Can Make You a New Man?

I KNOW what it means to have the kind of body that people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed only 97 lbs.! I was ashamed to strip for sports or undress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physical development that I was constantly self-conscious and embarrassed. And I felt only HALF-ALIVE.

But later I discovered the secret that turned me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And now I'd like to prove to you that the same system can make a NEW MAN of YOU!

What "Dynamic Tension" Will Do For You

I don't care how old or young you are or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps — yes, on each arm — in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day — right in your own home — is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice new, beautiful suit of muscle!

Only 15 Minutes A Day

No "ifs," "ands" or "maybes." Just tell me where you want handsome, powerful muscles. Are you fat and flabby? Or skinny and gawky? Are you short-winded, pepless? Do you hold back and let others walk off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details about *"Dynamic Tension"* and learn how I can make you a healthy, confident, powerful HE-MAN.

"Dynamic Tension" is an entirely NATURAL method. Only 15 minutes of your spare time daily is enough to show amazing results—and it's actually fun. *"Dynamic Tension"* does the work.

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool with. When you have learned to develop your strength through *"Dynamic Tension,"* you can laugh at *artificial* muscle-makers. You simply utilize the DORMANT muscle-power in your own body—watch it increase and multiply into real, solid LIVE MUSCLE.

My method—*"Dynamic Tension"*—will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And, man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of *"Dynamic Tension"* almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc. — to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

FREE BOOK "Everlasting Health and Strength"

In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can do for YOU! For a real thrill, send for this book today, AT ONCE. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 98, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

Charles Atlas

Holder of title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." As he looks today, from actual untouched snapshot.

Mail Coupon For My FREE Book

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 98,
115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of *"Dynamic Tension"* will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

☐ *Check here if under 16 for Booklet A.*

Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

September, 1943 Cover by A. R. Tilburne

LONG NOVELETTE

BLACK BARTER . . . . . Robert Bloch 6

In the shadowed silence wings of evil brushed my face as I sought a means to kindle living flesh from cold, dead marble

NOVELETTES

LOUELLA GOES HOME . . . . . Seabury Quinn 62

She had no education. But she knew her goal, even if the way did lead along paths of danger and doom

WINGS OF DEATH . . . . . Ralph Milne Farley 92

A strange tale of a strange place, and the giant, damnable insects!

SHORT STORIES

THE GEEZENSTACKS . . . . . Fredric Brown 28

The little girl thought the four wax dolls were just like her family—she didn't know how right she was!

BAYNTER'S IMP . . . . . August Derleth 35

When you've been in a bottle nine hundred years, said the Imp, you get out of practice, so it takes two whole days to materialize

CURSED AWAKENING . . . . . Manly Banister 40

We were-people remain beneath the sea because we must. We must not go upon the land in the day, nor during the dark of the moon

NIGHT MUST NOT COME . . . . . Allison V. Harding 54

The professor had uncovered the dread secret of darkness, and just before a city-wide blackout!

DEATH IN A GRAY MIST . . . . . Frank Owen 81

One by one the killers were killed; it was feared that soon there would be left only the one they came to murder

HERBERT WEST: REANIMATOR . . . . . H. P. Lovecraft 88

The scientist who becomes addicted to the fiendishly abnormal is himself more horrible than anything he does

VERSE

SEA SHELL . . . . . Leah Bodine Drake 87

SUPERSTITIONS AND TABOOS . . . . . Irwin J. Weill 52

THE EYRIE AND WEIRD TALES CLUB 107

Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

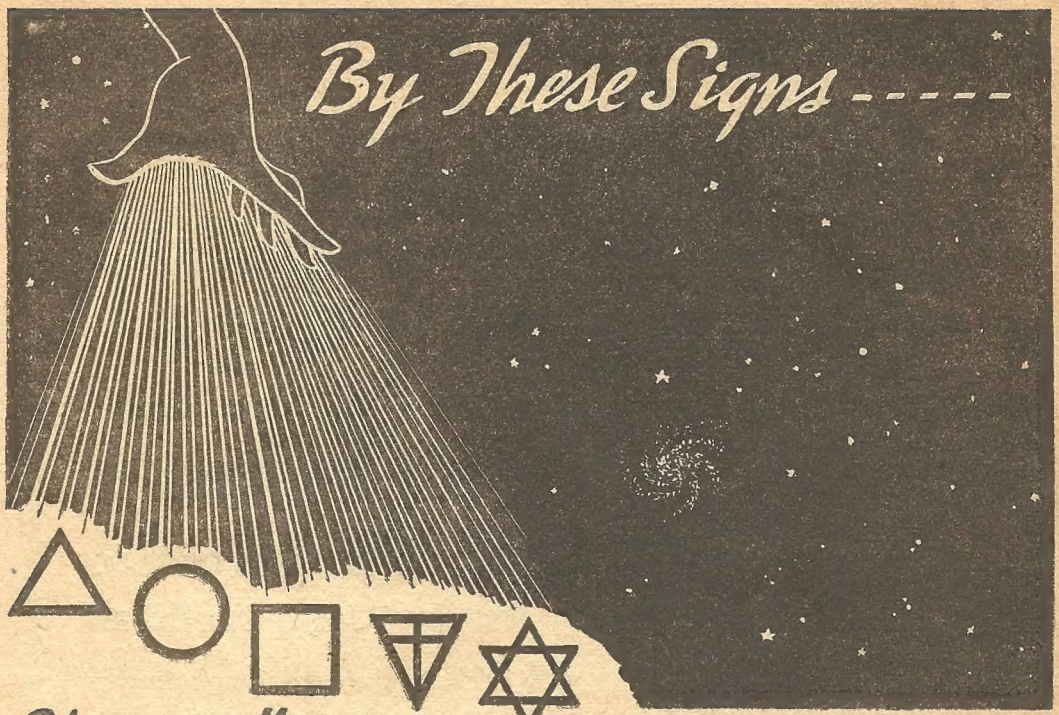
Published bi-monthly by Weird Tales, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 15 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, 90¢. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. English Office: Charles Lavell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand, London, W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

Copyright, 1943, by Weird Tales. Copyrighted in Great Britain.
Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.

173

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. Vol. 37. No. 1.

D. McILWRAITH, *Editor.* LAMONT BUCHANAN, *Associate Editor.*



Strange Keys to the Powers of the Universe

"GOD GEOMETRIZES," said an ancient sage. Within the straight line, curve, and angle—and their combinations—exist the forces of creation. These *secret symbols* contain the mysterious laws of the universe. Upon their right use—or the neglect of them—the success or failure of every *human enterprise* depends.

Have you a desire, *something you wish to accomplish* in life? Put your finger on a dot. In whatever direction you move your finger from the dot, you have made a beginning. Thus a dot is the symbol of *one*—or a beginning. Your desire then is also symbolized by *one*. If you follow the *proper method* or way to accomplish what you want, you have arrived at point *two*. Whenever these two symbols are brought together—the idea and the right way—you produce point *three*—the success of your plan. Success, therefore, is symbolized by the three equal sides of a *triangle*.

In planning your personal affairs—business, domestic, or the welfare of your family—do you use a *Cosmic formula?* Do you determine whether your acts are in accord with Divine truths eternally expressed in symbols? Why does the circle represent completion? Why is it said that a man is on the square? These symbols are used by astronomers and scientists to prove the physical laws of the universe—why don't you apply them to the problems of your everyday world? Learn what symbols, as powers and forces of nature, you can simply and intelligently use in directing the course of your life.

Let the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization), a world-wide brotherhood of learning, reveal to you *the symbolism of successful living.*

Let this GIFT BOOK Explain

If you want to prepare yourself through understanding for the greater rewards of life, write for the fascinating *free* Sealed Book. It explains how you may receive this age-old wisdom. Use the coupon below.

Scribe J. D. S.
THE ROSICRUCIANS, AMORC
San Jose, California, U. S. A.

Please send me the Free, Sealed Book. I am interested in knowing how I may obtain the masterful Rosicrucian teachings.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

THE ROSICRUCIANS, AMORC - SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U. S. A.

THE SHAPE OF THRILLS TO COME

THE THIRD CRY TO LEGBA

by Manly Wade Wellman

WHEN the curious or greedy invoke forces beyond their ken they must be ready to take both precautions and risks, for evil magic isn't to be poked into. . . !

Introducing a new character, John Thunstone, who will make further appearances in WEIRD TALES.

THE VALLEY OF THE ASSASSINS

by Edmond Hamilton

IN A VALLEY high in impregnable peaks is an ancient and terrible society of fanatics led by the most dreaded master of black magic Asia has ever known—a fiend whose first crimes were committed centuries ago!

Also—

H. P. LOVECRAFT

AUGUST DERLETH

and others

WEIRD TALES FOR NOVEMBER

Out

September First

Coming from Arkham House—Another Great Weird Masterpiece

BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP

by H. P. Lovecraft

At last! Volume II in the Lovecraft trilogy begun with THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS four years ago! Ready in September, BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP is another omnibus volume containing for the first time in print anywhere, the Lovecraft novel—

« « « **THE DREAM QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH** » » »

Together with the complete text of THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD, part of which appeared in Weird Tales, and such stories as The Moon Bog, Herbert West: Reanimator, The Hound, The White Ship, The Unnamable, The Doom That Came to Sarnath, The Quest of Iranon, The Tree, The Other Gods, etc.; collaborations—In the Walls of Eryx, The Crawling Chaos, The Green Meadow; stories like The Curse of Yig, The Horror in the Museum, etc., which Lovecraft helped bring into existence; such non-fiction as his autobiographical piece, Some Notes on a Nonentity, The Commonplace Book, a Chronology of the Necronomicon, Memory, Nyarlathotep, What the Moon Brings, Ibid, etc., the Selected Poems, including early poetry, The Ancient Track, the complete Fungi from Yuggoth, Psychopompos, and last poems; an appreciation of H. P. Lovecraft by his old friend, W. Paul Cook, and a Cthulhu Glossary by Francis Laney.

● Because it is already evident that we are going to run short of copies of THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS, we would like to plan a slightly larger edition of BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP, depending upon advance order volume. All those who send in advance orders for this second Lovecraft volume may order at $4.00 instead of $5.00; orders with payment must be mailed by September 10, 1943, after which date the price of the book will be $5.00.

ORDER TODAY!

WARNING: Less than 175 copies of THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS, by H. P. Lovecraft, remain to be sold. When these are gone, this great classic of the weird will be impossible to obtain. Less than half the editions of SOMEONE IN THE DARK, by August Derleth, and OUT OF SPACE AND TIME, by Clark Ashton Smith, remain for sale. Order now, if you do not already own these books, and help assure the future of the Arkham House Fantasy Library!

ARKHAM HOUSE, Sauk City, Wisconsin

Reserve for me ..... copies of BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP at $5.00 ($4.00 in advance: before September 10, 1943). Payment enclosed.

Send me ..... copies of THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS at $5.00
Send me ..... copies of SOMEONE IN THE DARK at $2.00
Send me ..... copies of OUT OF SPACE AND TIME at..... $3.00

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Black Barter

By ROBERT BLOCH

1. Stone Broke

WELL, I'm back again.

Remember me? I'm the fellow who got a job with Julius Margate. Margate, the sorceror, who lived in the big mansion and had a hobby of collecting monstrosities.

No, I'm not one of the monstrosities he collected. I just took care of them. That was my job—to act as a sort of nursemaid to mythological entities.

For example, it was my duty to feed Mr. Simpkins. He was a vampire, you may recall.

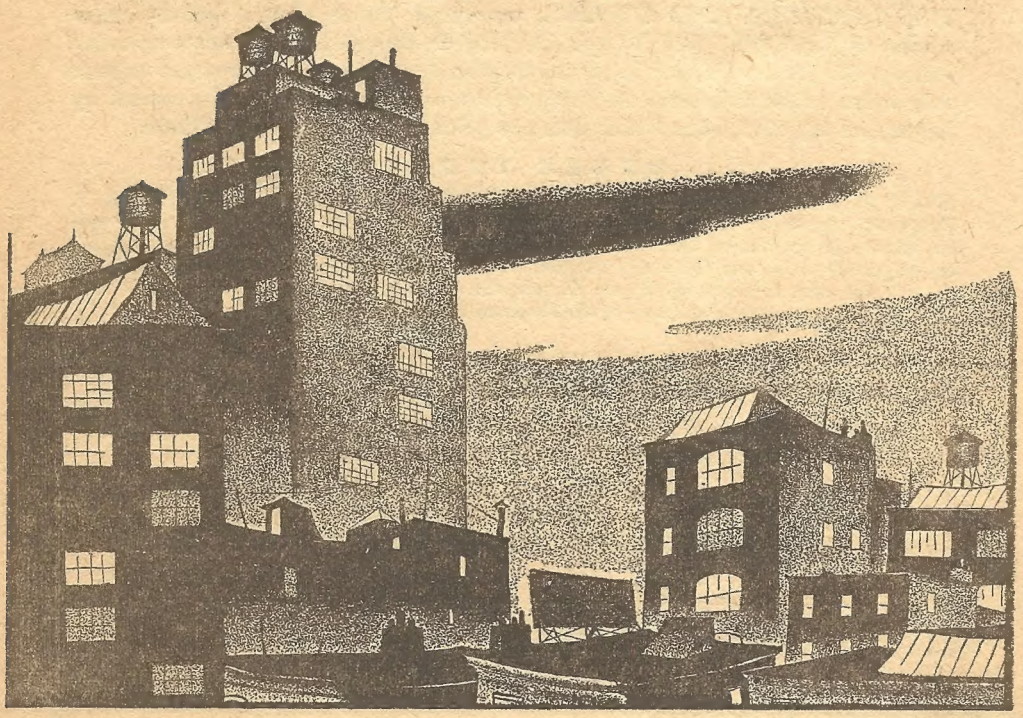
I recall it too, with shudders.

Then I took care of Jory the werewolf, and Gerymanx, who was a centaur. I also had charge of Myrtle, the hamadryad—a tree nymph. And of course, there was my special pet, Trina the mermaid. I built her a swimming pool and my gifts of herring showed that I was caring.

Oh, we were a happy little family, all right! Margate was so proud of his unusual collection of monsters, and I grew fond of them all.

Then came that ghastly day when Margate received a new pet for his collection. Nothing less than the hideous Medusa. And the sight of her turned Margate and his companions to stone.

Heading by BORIS DOLGOV



How I got rid of the Medusa is another story.

But when the Medusa was finally reduced to rubble, I was left all alone in Margate's big mansion, with nothing but stone statues for company. The stone images of Margate, Jory, Mr. Simpkins, Gerymanx, and Trina—and a stone tree on the lawn that was once Myrtle the hamadryad.

I used to sit in Margate's study, a huge room where he kept his collection of books on goety and necromantic divination, and brood despondently. I fingered his alembic, his bottles of root-extracts and poisons. There was one bottle I didn't dare touch—one that housed a geni.

After a few days I stopped fingering bottles and began to drink from them. For Margate had a stock of fine liquor in his

Would you believe it, the guy was so lonely he longed even for the sight of a vampire, a werewolf and a centaur!

cellar, right next to the coffin that once housed Mr. Simpkins, the vampire.

Who can blame me? I was so lonely! Lonely for a sight of my unusual friends. I used to brush the statues every day with loving care. Particularly the statue of Trina the mermaid. Ah, there was a girl! I sighed when I thought of her, and the wonderful times we'd spent together. She and I would sit in the magic moonlight and I would toss her a fish. The sight of her piquant face as she twisted her neck and caught the fish in her mouth—it haunted me with wistful poignancy.

A man can stand only so much of such moon-drenched memories. I had to do something.

Of course, I could have left the mansion and sought a job elsewhere. But if I went away, who would brush the dust from the faces of my stone friends? Into what unsympathetic hands would I entrust the statues? I couldn't bear the thought.

SO I stayed. Stayed and studied. Studied sorcery in the great black library of Julius Margate. Studied sorcery in the shadowed silence of dust-shrouded shelves.

I pored intently through endless pages, peered at passages in musty, iron-girdled tomes, perused with a perilous purpose.

For I was seeking a spell—an evocation—a rune or incantation—a rite or ritual—whereby I could summon my friends to animate life again. I sought to shatter that shroud of stone that swathed their souls.

Somewhere I must stumble across a solution, a means to kindle living flesh from marble. A mystic Pygmalion, I sought the formula to evoke a half-dozen Galateas.

There must be a way!

I read, and shuddered. Here and there were hints. Only a linguist could hope to translate Greek, Latin, medieval French and German, Sanskrit, Arabic and Hebrew.

Once translated, only a devotee of mantic arts would risk his soul to perform the dark offices necessary to conjure up Those who might grant the baleful boon of forbidden life.

But I searched. Day after day, night after night. When the autumnal skies were black as my despair, I read on. When the ravening winds howled as mournfully as the sighs that rose in my throat, I pondered over the yellowed, crumbling pages.

The wings of ancient evil brushed my face and left deep lines etched about my eyes, but I read on. I sat till dawn, forever seeking a solution for my dark desires.

Seated one night in the study, I heard a knock on the great outer door.

I rose, startled. Wryly, I thought of Poe's *Raven.* But dismissing the absurd fancy with a grin, I shook off my bemusement and stalked down the hall.

As I went striding along, blood flowed back into my cramped limbs. I began to feel a little foolish about the whole thing.

I was going to see another human face finally, and I was self-conscious about the way I'd been spending my time.

More than that, I experienced a curious elation. I didn't know who in the world would be knocking on Julius Margate's door around midnight, but anyone would prove a welcome visitor to me. I thirsted for companionship.

Just the mere act of answering the door brought my spirits up with a bound.

I unchained the door, fumbled with the lock, threw the door open wide.

There was a sudden swoop.

A broomstick hit me in the face.

Riding the broomstick was a witch!

2. Black Massacre

I LAY flat on my back and stared up as the witch swooped into the hallway on her broomstick.

"Whoa, there," muttered the witch, and the broomstick clattered to a halt on the floor. The witch climbed off slowly. A dog and a cat jumped down from the shaft of the broomstick behind her. The witch dumped a large satchel on the floor.

All the while, I stared, recognizing her for what she was. Oh, she was a witch, all right! The broomstick proved it—and so did the beaked nose, the wrinkled face, the gray, disheveled hair.

My first impulse was to stay right where I was, on the floor. It seemed somehow safer there. But the witch gave me a withering glance.

"Up off the floor with you," she snapped. "Is that any way to greet a guest?"

She placed her broomstick neatly in the corner.

I rose and faced her, mumbling my name. I didn't have the courage to hold out my hand in greeting.

She took no notice of the omission. A smile revealed her toothless gums.

"I am Miss Terioso," announced the witch. "An old friend of Julius Margate's."

"Is that so?" I answered, brilliantly.

"Used to see him around at covens," the witch explained.

"Covens?"

"Witch Sabbats," Miss Terioso enlightened me.

"But I didn't know he went in for such things."

"Oh, it was just a hobby with him. He dabbled a bit in witchcraft. Dabbled in everything, did Julius Margate. A bit of a dabbler and a bit of a babbler. Eh?"

Miss Terioso laughed. Some of the more sadistic radio advertisers might have liked that laugh for a spot announcement. I didn't care for it, myself.

"Aren't you going to ask me in?" she demanded. "Where's your courtesy, young sir?"

I indicated the parlor with a weak gesture. Miss Terioso's bent figure crept across the hall. She turned an evil profile toward me, and I'll swear she looked like something only a vulture would love. A mother vulture, at that.

"By the way," she screeched, "better get some milk for my dear pets here. My familiars, dear little lambs."

I stared at the snarling, mangy dog and the hissing, scrawny black cat. They padded towards me stealthily.

HASTILY, I backed into the hall and ran to the kitchen. Returning with a saucer of milk, I found the witch and her two familiars in the parlor under the lamplight.

"That's a courteous young man," approved Miss Terioso. "Let them sup on milk. Of course it's not as good as the real red stuff, but it's better than nothing. Eh?"

I nodded, but the last half of the nod was a shiver.

"Look at the darlings," commanded the witch. "My two sweet lovelies!"

"What are their names?" I asked, just as if I wanted to know.

"I call the cat Fido and the dog is named Puss," she told me.

"Very nice," I answered.

The witch sat down and raised her legs. With a shock I noticed that she was wearing slacks under her black skirt.

"Those slacks—" I began.

She giggled softly, like a wounded tigress.

"What's wrong with them?" she demanded. "Nothing immodest about slacks, young sir! I have to wear them. I'm certainly not going to ruin a good pair of silk stockings riding a broomstick."

This sounded logical.

"As it is, I'm worried about a straw shortage for my broom," Miss Terioso complained. She opened her big satchel

and took out a woolen knitting bag and two knitting needles.

"Do you knit?" I asked.

She giggled again. "Not exactly."

Reaching into the knitting bag she extracted a tiny wax mannikin and began to stick her knitting needles into its body.

"Just a poppet," she explained. "Do you mind if I work while we talk?"

"Not at all," I gulped.

She put the poppet away and reached into the big satchel again. When her hand emerged again it was clutching something.

A human arm!

She reached in again and drew out a leg. A shapely leg, but a severed limb, for all that.

"Murderess!" I choked.

Miss Terioso smiled. "Flatterer!" she cooed. "I haven't really murdered anyone in years! No, young sir. These are not human limbs. They are the limbs of a window dummy. Here."

She began to bring out more appendages from her satchel. Another arm, another leg. A torso. And finally, a lovely head with a red wig.

Expertly, she fitted the various parts together. Soon a complete window dummy stood before us. A very pretty redheaded window dummy—distinctly female.

"Just a notion of mine," Miss Terioso explained. "I began to think that my poppets were too small to really get delicate work into them with the needles. So I bought this window dummy. It's still a wax figure, but a life-sized one. Clever, eh?"

"Clever is no word for it," I said. And it wasn't.

Suddenly Miss Terioso shrugged.

"But let us get down to business, then," she declared. "I am here for a definite reason. I want Julius Margate."

"You can't see him." I spoke too rapidly to be cautious about it. "You can't see him. He's turned to stone."

The witch grinned.

"I know. I know all about it. He's stone and the rest of his freaks are statues, too. And I want him."

"You want his statue?"

"Yes."

Was I crazy, or did Miss Terioso blush slightly?

"I—I used to have a crush on the old fool," she explained. "I'd like to have him around for sentimental reasons."

Somehow this didn't sound convincing. She looked about as sentimental as a barracuda.

There was more here than met the eye, I decided. So I also decided on a little strategy.

"By the way, Miss Terioso," I began. "Before we get down to details—would you care for a little refreshment?"

The witch simpered. "Don't mind if I do, young sir. Have you a bit of human—" She checked herself hastily. "No, I don't suppose you would," she sighed.

"Be right back," I promised.

AND I was. I went down to the cellar, rummaged around, and emerged with a fifth of Irish whiskey and two glasses. Bearing the refreshments back to the parlor, I poured out two neat shots.

Miss Terioso drained her glass.

I refilled it.

Miss Terioso drank the second as a chaser, so I refilled it again.

"Very pleasant," she told me. "I enjoy something mild for a change."

"One of Margate's prize bottles," I remarked.

"Speaking of bottles," she interrupted, "I meant to tell you this before. I not only want to buy Margate and the other statues, but that geni in the bottle as well. He has a geni in a bottle, hasn't he?"

I admitted it. "But what I want to

know," I said, filling her glass for the fifth time, "is what you want with those statues."

She drank. I refilled her glass.

"I told you," she repeated. "I am sentimental about the old son of a poltergeist. I'd like to have him around to look at. eh?"

The liquor was working. The witch was getting slightly tipsy. I refilled her glass once more and proceeded artfully.

"Come now," I coaxed. "We're friends, aren't we? You can tell me the truth. What do you really want with those statues?"

"Ha!" cackled Miss Terioso. "He's so artful, this kind young sir. Methinks he wants me to betray the fact that I intend to re-animate those statues myself and bring them back to life. But he'll never squeeze a word about it from me, he won't! Eh?"

I smiled and pressed my fingers together judiciously before my face.

"Suppose someone wanted to bring the statues back to life," I said, just as if I'd never heard her maunderings. "Would it be possible through sorcery?"

"Anything is possible through sorcery, my pet," said the witch. "If one is willing to pay the price."

She cackled, grabbed the bottle, and clawed it to her scrawny bosom.

"Now the price for a fine young man like you would be high," she mumbled. "But an old hand like myself—blast you, there are ways and means of paying very little. Of striking bargains, as it were. I should conjure a demon . . . a friendly one, of course . . . and I should not sell my soul. I could not, for I sold it long ago. Long, long ago."

The witch began to sing *Long, Long Ago* in a voice like a tugboat's whistle. I coughed discreetly.

"Eh? It's the problem of animating those statues, isn't it, dear sir?" Miss Terioso smiled. "I have a sort of a due bill on Hell, so to speak. There are certain powers and perquisites coming to me. I should just summon my demon, ask the boon, and the statues would be warm flesh and blood in the twinkling of an owl's eye!"

She drank again.

"But how do you summon demons?' I demanded.

"You hold a Black Mass," she answered. Everybody knows that." Suddenly a look of crafty reticence spread over her wrinkled countenance. "But I'm talking too much. I see that now. I'll not tell you how to hold a Mass to Satan, never fear. I'd be such a silly to tell you, eh?"

I was prepared for this. For suddenly I saw a way of bringing back my friends. So I proceeded deliberately about my appointed task.

"You can't fool me," I mocked. "You and your talk about Black Masses and witchcraft." I rose and smiled. "You and your ridiculous little wax figures. And this foolish looking window dummy here!" I tapped the red-headed dummy with an accusing finger.

"You aren't a witch," I told her. "Just a broken-down dressmaker, I'm thinking! All this is nonsense."

She rose to the bait.

"Nonsense, is it?" screeched Miss Terioso. "I'm not a witch, eh? I, the most famous sorceress in three continents and four dimensions?"

"Black Mass," I chortled, scornfully. "That's horseplay of another color."

Miss Terioso gulped the last drink in the bottle and lurched to her feet. She stared at me with bloodshot eyes.

"You can't hold a Black Mass," I snickered.

"Oh, can't I?" snarled the witch. "I'll show you! I'll not only hold a Black Mass —I'll blessed well hold one with stripes if you like!"

3. The Mass Is a Mess

MISS TERIOSO swayed out into the wide hallway. I followed at her run-down heels, gasping in mingled apprehension and excitement.

Then we stood in the huge room that held the statuary. I lit a lamp and revealed the stony images of my friends. There was pot-bellied little Julius Margate, his face a marble mask of bewilderment. Gaunt Mr. Simpkins hovered, his false teeth forever frozen in an embarrassed grin. Jory, as a stone wolf, held a petrified paw in the air. Gerymanx was a noble Grecian centaur and looked somehow natural in stone. And Trina made a beautiful mermaid. She had a gorgeous shape—plenty of these and those, and fins, too.

I sighed.

The witch wheezed alcoholically in my face.

"Think I can't do it?" she muttered.

"A Black Mass? It's ridiculous," I told her. "I understand you must draw a pentagon in blue chalk, and use holy wafers and sacramental wine. And you intone the Lord's Prayer backwards in Latin, and use the body of a naked woman for an altar."

"Right," said the witch.

"Well, you haven't got the facilities, so that's that!" I jeered.

Miss Terioso tittered drunkenly.

"I'll fix that," she promised. "You've got some chalk, haven't you, dear boy? Margate must have some around for his own spells."

I rummaged through the library and returned with a stub of blue, phosphorescent chalk.

I found Miss Terioso on her way back from the kitchen, laden with packages.

"Here's the chalk."

She set to work on hands and knees, drawing a glowing blue line. Panting, she arose.

"That's no pentagon," I exclaimed. "There's only four sides to it."

"Ran out of chalk," mumbled the witch. "It doesn't matter, really."

She faced me and began to chew on something.

"Holy wafer?" I asked.

"No," said Miss Torioso. "Haven't got any. This is a graham cracker. Same thing, almost."

She drank something out of a cup.

Sacramental wine?"

"Coca-cola," the witch explained. "They will probably never know the difference."

Suddenly she ran tipsily out of the room and returned with the window dummy, which she placed across two chairs.

"We have no naked woman for an altar, so the dummy will have to do," said Miss Terioso. "Here goes for the invocation."

As the phosphorescent chalk glowed in the darkness, the witch crouched over the window dummy, mumbling sonorously.

"Wait a minute," I interrupted. "That doesn't sound like the Lord's Prayer backwards in Latin."

"Don't remember the Latin," sighed the witch. "I'm using pig-Latin."

She continued. After a moment she began to make passes with her clawlike hands. Her voice deepened, then rose shrilly. I recognized rumbling syllables and shrieking vocables.

The cadence was rhythmic. In my fancy the blue lines of the pentagon began to dance in pulsation with her pronouncements.

It wasn't fancy. The lines moved. The room swayed. Her voice shrieked.

Miss Terioso turned blue in the face. Her drunken mumblings slurred oddly. She began to sway.

The sight was very impressive. She looked just as though she had been given a Mickey Finn.

With a supernatural belch, Miss Terioso slid to the floor in a dead faint.

"Out like a light," I sighed. "Oh well, I might have known the old hag couldn't do it."

"Do what?"

"Why, that she couldn't—*hey!*" I wheeled suddenly as I realized that a strange voice had addressed me.

Staring across the blue line I saw the strange owner of the strange voice.

This time I almost slid to the floor.

But not quite. I gazed at the presence on the other side of the pseudo-pentagon.

Was it a demon?

If demons have red, scaly bodies like gigantic lizards, and semi-anthropomorphic limbs, slick hairless skulls, and faces like grinning death—then it was a demon, all right.

Or a demon, all wrong.

Because despite this terrifying aspect, there was something horribly bedraggled about this apparition.

HIS eyes were bloodshot. His cheeks were scratched. His arms hung limply, and his chest rose and fell in despairing gasps. I noticed that his tail was dragging.

"Go ahead," said the deep voice, in accents that congealed my vertebrae. "Go ahead, make sport of me! You accursed human midge! You enscorcelled scum, you foul thaumaturgical impostor! You're not fit to be impaled on a spit for a weenie roast in hell!"

"What do you mean?" I gulped.

"What do I mean? The infernal impudence of the nigromantic nincompoop! I mean you bungled the whole ceremony! You used the wrong materials, you gave the wrong accent to the invocations, you even left out part of the Gloric Chant!"

"But—"

"And what does that mean? I'll tell you what," snarled the demon, and his eyes flashed at 400° Fahrenheit. "It means I was dragged bodily through five-dimensional space. It means I was twisted through the veritable warpings in the spatial continuum! I was bruised and battered and banged and buffeted, and nearly annihilated before I got here! My mundane simulacrum was almost impossible to assume.

"And why? Because an amateur sorceror like yourself didn't know how to call me. Why you don't know enough to raise the dead! Why don't you read the rule books?"

"Wait a minute," I temporized. "I didn't call you. She did—Miss Terioso the witch. She was drunk and forgot a lot of things."

"Drunk, eh?" said the demon, with a self-righteous smirk. "Serves her right. Never touch the stuff myself. Wine is a mocker."

I nodded.

The demon did an alarming thing. He thrust his head out on his rubbery neck. It stretched a good foot.

As he darted his skull forward and back restlessly, I diffidently jumped a yard to one side.

"Well, now that I'm here, what are you going to do about it?" demanded the demon. "Have I wriggled through the dimensions all for nothing? I want something to eat, something to kill, or something to bargain over."

"I'll bargain with you," I said boldly.

"You?" The demon sniffed. "You aren't a sorceror. What can you offer me? Your soul?"

"I don't think so," I hesitated.

"Current rate of exchange is very favorable," said the demon suddenly all coaxing smiles. "I pay highest prices."

"Not interested," I insisted.

"Then I might as well go," the demon sighed.

Inspiration smote me.

"Wait a minute," I snapped. "I'll give you a wonderful trade. How would you like to own a geni?"

"A geni? You have a geni?" The glare on the demon's face registered red incredulity. "I doubt that very much."

"I have a geni in a bottle," I told him. "Wait right here and I'll be back in a flash with the flask."

He waited, and I was.

Barely a minute passed before I returned, bearing the curious old bottle from Margate's library. Within it gurgled the geni, like a shrunken mermaid.

The demon goggled.

"You *have* got one at that," he admitted. His eyes narrowed to cunning slits.

"What are you asking for it?" he purred.

"A boon."

"Be specific."

"I want these statues reanimated," I said, waving my arm to embrace the stone images around me. "I want their souls, or life-force, to return to flesh instead of stone."

"That's very difficult," said the demon, thoughtfully. "Couldn't you settle for something easier? How about a blonde? Lots of you magicians seem to go for deals involving blondes. A nice blond *succubae,* now, with big—"

"Never mind," I insisted. "I want those statues alive."

The demon shrugged. "I don't know."

"Think of the geni," I said, shaking the bottle. "One of your own kind. A helpless prisoner in a bottle. How would you like to be shut up in a bottle, like—like an olive?"

The demon winced. I knew I had him.

"I am too soft-hearted," he rumbled. "But I'll do it. Or try to do it. A most unusual request, and there's so much to arrange."

"Get to work," I said. "I'll toss you the bottle in a moment."

"Hold on," advised the demon. "This is liable to be a bit messy."

It was.

I didn't mind the way the air changed colors as the demon crouched in the center of the room, croaking gutturally as he squatted like a malignant frog.

I didn't mind the great quaking wind that rose to howl through my hair.

I didn't mind the smoke and the flame.

But when the chandelier crashed from the ceiling and hit me on the head, I minded very much indeed.

The world went black and I went to sleep beside Miss Terioso on the floor.

There was a confused impression of a gigantic hand grasping the geni-bottle, a muffled illusion of smoke and shouting, and then I went out, like the proverbial light.

The next thing I knew I was awake, spitting out a mouthful of broken glass.

"What a hangover!" I whispered.

"Oh, yeah?" said a strange voice.

4. A Bunch of Busy Bodies

I SAT up. Miss Terioso and the shattered chandelier still lay on the floor. But the demon had vanished from the chalk formation, and the bottle with the geni was nowhere to be seen.

I groped for the light, seeking the source of the voice.

Radiance flooded the room and I stared at the statues.

Statues no longer!

They *were* alive. I saw familiar flesh once more. The grotesque bodies of men and the wolf and the centaur and mermaid were moving.

I ran over to Trina. The beautiful mermaid with the lovely green hair stared up at me with a radiant smile.

"Trina, darling!" I whispered, taking her in my arms.

"Get away from me or I'll kick your teeth down your throat with my hoofs!" boomed a gruff voice.

"But you have no hoofs, dear," I laughed. "You're a mermaid. You have a—"

"Don't you call me 'dear,' you oaf! I'm a centaur!" growled the voice.

I stepped back in dismay.

That voice—I recognized it—was the voice of Gerymanx the centaur! But it came from Trina's body!

I rushed over to Gerymanx.

"Hello, my friend," came the calm words. Again I recognized the voice from the centaur's body. It was the voice of Julius Margate!

"Who—who are you?" I whispered.

The centaur smiled. "I'm Margate, of course. Who else would I be?"

I gulped. "You're sure?"

"Of course."

"Come here." I grabbed the centaur's arm and led the figure over to a full-length mirror.

"Take a look," I suggested.

HE looked at himself—at the horse body projecting behind him. When he saw what he was dragging around in the rear, the man almost collapsed.

"But I'm Margate!" he wailed. "What am I doing in Gerymanx's body?"

"What is Gerymanx doing in Trina's body?" I asked.

"Who is in my body?" Margate suddenly yelled. He ran over to confront his body and reached out a cautious hand to grasp the chest.

"What are you reaching for, dearie?" lisped a high voice. "Be careful how you handle my trunk."

"Myrtle!" whispered Margate. "Myrtle, the hamadryad."

"Of course," answered Myrtle. "Can't you recognize my limbs?"

"What is all this?" demanded the rasping voice that had roused me from unconsciousness. I turned to face tall Mr. Simpkins.

"Why am I not a wolf?" demanded the voice. "Who stole my form? Why am I a wolf in Mr. Simpkins' clothing?"

It was Jory the werewolf, in the vampire's body. As I expected, the vampire was now wearing the wolf-form instead.

"Is this a way for a self-respecting vampire to be?" groaned the wolf. "Going around on all fours like an animal?"

"Something terrible has happened," I gasped. "You're alive, but your souls got into the wrong bodies. The demon made a mistake. You've switched."

Then I remembered. Gerymanx was in Trina's body. But where was Trina?

I stared out the open window. Then I saw it—the tree, the tree of Myrtle the hamadryad. Trina had to be in the tree! It must have been transformed through the open window like the rest of the statuary.

Running across the room, I bounded out on the lawn and threw my arms around the tree-trunk.

"Trina," I whispered. "Trina, darling!"

There was no answer.

"Trina, speak to me!"

Not a leaf rustled.

I stumbled back into the room. "Trina," I groaned.

"Here I am, darling!"

The familiar voice fired my blood.

I turned my head.

Coming toward me was—*the red-headed window dummy!*

She fell into my embrace, the lovely waxen figure, and we kissed.

I shuddered. She was alive—but still wax.

Now I understood. In the mixup, the window dummy, having no soul, probably entered Myrtle's tree. Trina entered the body of the window dummy.

So there we stood.

A vampire in a werewolf's body, a werewolf in a vampire's. A man in a centaur's form, and a centaur in a mermaid. A mermaid in a window dummy, and a tree nymph in the shape of a man.

And I myself, in one hell of a mess!

5. A Witch Flies Off—in a Rage

MISS TERIOSO couldn't have picked a worse moment to regain consciousness. Which is probably why she picked this moment.

The witch rose from the floor and her bleary gaze swept the room more thoroughly than her broom could have done the job. In a moment comprehension came to her.

"So you made your own bargain with the demon," she scolded me. "Gave him the geni, I warrant? A clever young sir, aren't you. I've a good mind to—"

Then she saw the face of Julius Margate.

Instantly a change swept over Miss Terioso. I remembered she had admitted having a crush on Mr. Margate—and her actions now confirmed the fact.

She simpered coyly, straightened her stringy hair, and assumed a smile such as one sees on the face of a particularly hungry crocodile.

"Why Julius, my dear!" she gushed, advancing on Mr. Margate with a sickening leer. "I'm so glad to see you."

"Keep your hands off me, you old cow!" shrilled a high voice.

Miss Terioso halted and stared at the man.

"Don't look at me that way, you Walpurgistic wench!" said the voice from Margate's body.

Miss Terioso, not realizing that Margate's body was now inhabited by Myrtle the hamadryad, was confused.

"Here I am," called another voice. "It's me, Julius Margate, over here."

The witch turned to face the centaur. Her face was shock-proof, but her lips twitched.

"Don't you recognize me, sugar?" asked Julius Margate, waving his tail coyly.

Miss Terioso gaped at the centaur.

"Who is making sport of me?" she snapped. "What sort of jest are you playing?"

"Nobody's making fun of you," insisted Margate. "Come on over and get friendly. I'll give you a ride around the block if you like."

The witch froze. "I don't want a ride around the block," she announced. "I'm getting out of here."

She swooped across the hall and returned with the cat and dog under her arm. She set her satchel and broomstick down.

"I'm leaving, baggage and broomstick," sniffed Miss Terioso. "Oh, yes, I must take my window dummy, too."

"Not me," said Trina.

The witch goggled at the red-headed wax dummy.

"Did you speak?" she demanded.

"Of course. What's the matter with your ears, outside of their looks?" Trina replied.

"Something is very much wrong here," the witch declared.

"I've been trying to tell you," I said. I explained briefly.

Miss Terioso nodded.

"Nevertheless, the window dummy is mine. It's my poppet, and I shall pop off with it."

"Go fly your broomstick," shrilled Trina the mermaid. "And don't call me a dummy, you Halloween hag!"

"She's right," said Margate, from the centaur's body. "You have no claim on a soul. You'd better go now."

"You dare to order me out of your house?" screamed the witch.

"I dare to throw you out," said Margate.

Miss Terioso made for the door, hastily. She mounted her broomstick and turned.

"Very well," she sniffed. "Good riddance to all of you. And as for you, Julius Margate, you're just a—oh, go look in a rear-view mirror and see what you are!"

The door banged shut behind her.

THERE was an ominous silence. I felt the danger of that silence. I knew my peculiar friends. They were bad enough to handle in their own weird bodies. But now that those bodies were all mixed up, I'd better do something in a hurry.

"You must be hungry after such an ordeal," I said. "Let's all go out to the kitchen and I'll whip up a snack to eat."

We did.

They ate ravenously. The sight of a mermaid eating oats and a centaur smoking a cigar rather spoiled my own appetite. And the clumsiness of all of them in their new forms did something to general table manners. But hunger ruled for a while.

Then they finished, and gloom reigned.

"This is a fine mess," sighed Gerymanx. "What do we do now? Usually after a meal I go out for a brisk trot around the stable and grounds. But now I'm a mermaid. I can't even canter."

"I'd like to go out and have the birds perch on my limbs," sighed Myrtle. "But I can't, in this man's body. It's so difficult. I doubt if I can even get a robin to build a nest in my hair."

"Don't you dare put bird-nests in my hair," yelled Margate, from the centaur's body.

"Your hair?"

"That body you're wearing still belongs to me," Margate insisted. "I expect you to take good care of it."

"What about me?" asked Jory, disconsolately. "I'd like to howl in the sunshine at dawn. But in a vampire's body I'll have to sleep all day in a musty old coffin."

"That's nothing," responded Mr. Simpkins the vampire. "Just look at me in this wolf's form! I'm afraid I'm going to shed all over the place. And I can't seem to get the knack of changing back into a man! You'll have to give me some lessons soon, Jory."

"Your troubles are mild," insisted Julius Margate. "How can I go out in polite society in a centaur's body? It's enough to give anybody a fright."

Trina pouted at me from the window dummy's body.

"Can I take a swim in the pool?" she whispered.

"No. Your wax will spoil," I told her sadly.

"We've got to settle this problem somehow," said Julius Margate. "Wonder if we could call up that demon again and make him put us in the right bodies?"

"Not without selling somebody's soul," I told my employer. "I've made the only trade I could, and from now on, souls are the articles of exchange. And I won't sell my soul, I'll tell you that!"

Margate shook his head.

"We'll have to figure it out," he declared. "It can't go on like this forever. It isn't natural for a werewolf to be a vampire, and a centaur to be a mermaid."

"It isn't natural for a mermaid to be a window dummy either," said my red-headed companion. "I'm dying to be tearing a herring."

Her words smote my heart.

"I'll think of something, folks," I promised. "Tomorrow night, when Mr. Jory wakes up at sundown in Mr. Simpkins' body, we can get together again and figure something out. Right now we all need sleep after this excitement."

So, yawning at dawning, we went to bed.

I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. But I didn't dream.

The way things were going, I was having my nightmares when I was wide awake.

6. A Slightly Cracked Beldame

"WE'VE got to do something, right now!" insisted Julius Margate, over the supper table.

The heads of his bedraggled companions nodded in eager assent.

"I'm sick of sleeping in a coffin," said Jory the werewolf. "I want to go back to my dog kennel." He shot a malicious glance at Mr. Simpkins in his wolf's body.

Simpkins wagged his tail. "What about me?" he complained. "I turned into a man in the daylight but when the sun set tonight I became a wolf again. And I don't like it. I think I'm getting the mange."

Gerymanx the centaur, in his mermaid form, propped both elbows on the table and sighed. "Being a mermaid is no fun, either," he declared. "I can't go near that swimming pool unless I get a pair of water wings.

"Imagine a mermaid who doesn't know how to swim!"

He started to expand on the theme, then turned in shocked surprise to survey the body of Julius Margate. Julius Margate's human body rose and began to divest itself of clothing.

"What goes on here?" I asked, in a startled voice.

"Oh," said Myrtle the hamadryad, from within Margate's body. "I'm just pruning off these clothes, that's all. I can't stand the pressure on my limbs."

"Please, for the sake of decency," I protested. "Wait a while. I'll find a way to restore you all to your proper shapes."

"Hurry, darling." It was the voice of Trina in my ear. The wax dummy leaned close. "I do so want to kiss you," said the girl, wistfully. "But every time I try it, my head falls off."

"Yes, hurry up," yelled Julius Margate, from the body of Gerymanx the centaur. "I'm afraid to visit the barber shop to get my tail clipped."

"Too bad," I sympathized.

"And that's not all," sighed Margate. "I wish you'd go and steal the witch's broom and use it to sweep out the stable."

"There's an idea!" cried Trina.

"What?"

"Why don't you go and visit the witch tomorrow? Persuade *her* to hold another Black Mass."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, she has some kind of a due-bill on hell, hasn't she? She can get the demon to switch us back into our regular bodies. Then we can be self-respecting mermaids and vampires and werewolves again."

"Brilliant!" said Julius Margate.

"But the witch is mad at us," I objected.

"Then you must soften her up," Margate told me. "Make love to her, or something."

"Make love to a witch? A dizzy old spinster like her?"

"She's not so bad," Margate lied.

"She's not exactly a spring chicken, either," I answered. "She's more like a vulture."

"It's the only way out," Margate snapped. "You'll have to do it. You can't let us down this way."

I sighed and nodded.

Trina nibbled my ear with waxen lips. "Just remember," she whispered. "Make love to her, but no funny stuff. I get jealous so easily. Why it makes my wax melt to think of you in her arms."

"It makes my blood freeze to think of that," I replied.

"Even if you have ice-cubes in your veins, you must go through with it," implored Julius Margate. "Tomorrow you woo the witch."

And so it was decided.

NEXT afternoon, after getting directions from Julius Margate, I left the mansion on the hill and set out along a winding path through the woods to the house of Miss Terioso.

Carrying a basket on my arm, I approached the cottage feeling like Little Red Riding Hood on her way to Grandma's house.

Miss Terioso's cottage looked something like Grandma's house at that—except for

the red and green smoke that poured from the crumbling stone chimney as I walked up the path.

The smoke assumed ghastly, billowing shapes, and I averted my eyes. I preferred to read the signs on the cottage lawn.

"MISS TERIOSO—BLACK, WHITE, & ALL COLORS OF MAGIC"
"LOVE PHILTRES. FORTUNES TOLD. PSYCHO-ANALYSIS"
"UNFAMILIAR SPIRITS KEEP OUT"

I knocked on the door, letting my trembling wrist provide the leverage.

Miss Terioso stuck her head out. "We don't want any," she said. "Oh, it's you, young sir. Step in, won't you?"

I would, and did.

There was a bearskin rug in the hallway. As I put my foot on it, it grunted horribly, and the gigantic head rose with gnashing teeth.

"Down, Bruno!" commanded the witch. The rug subsided, and regarded me through malevolent glass eyes.

I stood in the witch's cottage, glancing around at the ancient furniture—1890 vintage, and typical of an old maid's home.

Miss Terioso resumed her seat by the fire and took up her knitting. She was silent, absorbed.

I looked at the placards on the walls. There was a Charter Membership in Local Coven Number 9, and a neatly embroidered motto, decorated with mandrake roots, reading *"A Fiend in Need Is a Fiend Indeed."*

Then I broke the silence.

"What are you knitting?" I inquired.

"Oh, just a shroud," said Miss Terioso, brightly.

I coughed. "I've brought you a little present," I coaxed.

Her eyes brightened. I handed her the basket. She opened the cover.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Just a little wax fruit."

"Wax fruit?"

"To melt down into poppets," I explained.

Miss Terioso favored me with a warm smile.

"How kind of you," she gushed.

I turned on the charm. "I was so delighted to see you the other evening," I said, sitting down. "I admired you greatly."

"You *did?*" She positively simpered.

"Yes. I said to myself, 'now there's a girl with real high spirits about her;' that's what I said."

"Flatterer! I usually consort with low spirits," Miss Terioso gurgled.

"I was wondering if you'd care to have a date with me," I ventured. "How about going out tonight?"

"Why, there's no Sabbat tonight."

"I wasn't thinking of a Sabbat," I answered. "Just a little stepping. You know, hitting a few high spots."

"You really want to?" beamed the witch.

"Definitely."

She blushed. "Very well. But first I must go to the beauty parlor. I'll drop you off at home on the way and then pick you up afterwards when we go out."

Miss Terioso rose and bustled over to her broomstick.

I gulped.

"We're not going to ride that thing, are we?" I asked.

"We must," she declared. "Haven't you heard about gas rationing?"

Trembling, I mounted the broomstick behind her. She opened the cottage door, muttered a few words under her breath, and we were off in the twilight.

7. *Tree's a Crowd*

I DON'T know whether or not you've ever ridden a broomstick, but it's not an experience one is likely to forget. I don't like to think about that soaring sweep

through dusk-driven skies. All I can say is that for my money, the broomstick will never replace the horse.

When I was finally dropped off—literally—at my destination—Miss Terioso waved farewell and called that she would come back from the beauty parlor and pick me up again.

For several minutes I wondered if she would have to pick me up, actually, before I'd be able to stir. But after a time I groaned, stood up, and hobbled into the house.

The gang bombarded me with questions.

"Did you see her?"

"What did she say?"

"Did you make a date?"

I answered definitely. "I'm taking Miss Terioso out to dine and dance this evening," I announced. "Margate, I'm borrowing one of your tuxedoes. And about $30 in cash."

Trina walked up to me, her wax arms swinging in agitation.

"I'm jealous," she confessed. "Take me with you as a chaperone."

"Impossible," I sighed.

"Then I'll go alone, with Myrtle in Margate's body," she declared. "I don't trust you with that baleful hag."

"I'll hitch up the station-wagon," Margate chimed in. "Then I'll harness myself to it and pull the rest of you into town."

I protested.

"Do you want to spoil everything? You'll make a terrible scene in human society! Leave everything to me," I argued.

"But—"

There was a thump from upstairs.

Miss Terioso had made a three-point landing on the roof.

"Get out of sight," I commanded. "Don't let her see you and arouse her anger. I'll skip upstairs and change and crawl out the skylight to join her. Now all of you stay here and behave. I'll have you back in your bodies before morning."

They scattered, and I scampered.

Five minutes later I joined Miss Terioso on the roof.

I stared at the vision in the starlight.

For Miss Terioso was changed. The magic of the beauty parlor had wrought a startling transformation.

This was no old crone who awaited me, but a radiantly lovely woman—a vivid brunette with lips as red as love's own fire. Her eyes sparkled and she smiled with pleasure as she noted my reaction.

"Life in the old gal yet, eh?" she said. Her voice was low, husky.

I said nothing, but mounted the broomstick and put my arms around her. Her nearness was intoxicating.

We sailed up toward the stars. Her hair streamed in the wind, mingling with the moonlight.

I enjoyed the ride.

All incongruity was forgotten. By the time we landed on a fire-escape and clambered down to reach a night-club entrance, we were chatting merrily.

We swept into the lobby of the club and Miss Terioso checked her broomstick in the cloakroom.

A waiter led us across the dance-floor to a table.

"Champagne," I ordered.

I didn't need it. I was intoxicated, as I say, by her presence. But revolving drunkenly in the back of my brain was the consciousness of my purpose.

Soon I would artfully wheedle and cajole her into changing my friends back. But the evening was young now, and I could enjoy myself first. Enjoy her company. Gaze into those burning black eyes. Hold her flowery-fragrant fingers.

We lifted our glasses.

"Here's to you," murmured Miss Terioso.

"Here's to—us," I corrected.

"Yes," she sighed.

We drank.

After that I tried to sit on her lap.

Now, thinking back, I know what must have happened. Miss Terioso was an old hand at the game.

She'd probably anticipated this, the old she-wolf, and slipped a love philtre into my drink.

But the effects were startling.

All at once I knew that I was madly in love with Miss Terioso. The thought of my friends, the thought of Trina—all was forgotten.

SHE gave me a demure glance and I held her hand and stared into her inscrutable eyes and I leaned forward over the table, and then I got hit in the head with a human leg.

Yes, a human leg sailed through the air and hit me on the back of the head!

That's one way to sober a fellow up.

I turned quickly and stared.

Lying on the floor was a leg. With a shock, I recognized it. Trina's leg, from the window dummy!

Employing my knowledge of trajectory, I wheeled around and stared at a table across the way.

Sure enough, Trina had made good her threat! She sat at another table with Myrtle in Margate's body.

I collected my scattered wits hastily. Then, bending down, I collected the scattered leg, rose politely, mumbled an excuse to Miss Terioso, and stalked over to the table carrying the wax leg.

"Pardon me, madam, but I think you've lost something," I said, for the benefit of eavesdroppers. Trina accepted the leg, bent down, fastened it on again, and winked.

"What the hell's the big idea?" I whispered, furiously. "I thought I told you to stay home."

"We're going to keep an eye on you," Trina answered. "After getting an eyeful of that glamorous hag, I don't trust you any further than I can throw my limbs."

"We're all here," added Myrtle, from Margate's body.

"No!"

But as I glanced around, I saw Mr. Simpkins and Jory at another table, in each other's bodies. Jory's body had resumed human shape.

"Margate and Gerymanx are outside, in the centaur's and mermaid's bodies," Myrtle added. "They came in the wagon."

"I hope to heaven they stay there," I sighed. "What if the customers saw those monsters?"

It was a hideous thought. As things were, the situation was bad enough. No sooner had I uttered the words than I caught a snatch of conversation between Myrtle and a stranger at the adjoining table.

Myrtle, in Margate's body, had probably been drinking. The stranger certainly had. His little bloodshot eyes revolved woozily as he mumbled.

"Pardon me, sir," he hiccuped. "But that lady at th' table wish' you—has she got wooden leg, huh?"

"Sure," answered Myrtle, gaily.

"Mos' unusual," said the drunk.

"What's unusual about that?" demanded Myrtle, suddenly argumentative. "Why shouldn't she have a wooden leg? Me, I'm *all* wood!"

Under the influence of liquor, Myrtle forgot she was in Margate, and thought of herself as still being a hamadryad in a tree. But the drunken stranger didn't know this. He peered incredulously.

"You're all wood?" he echoed.

"Of course," said Myrtle. "Do you want to examine my trunk?"

"You're crazy!" sneered the drunk, wobbling to his feet.

"I am not," said Myrtle. "I can prove that I'm a tree. Why, I even have termites!"

"I wouldn't brag about it, sir."

"Say, who are you calling 'sir'?" shrilled

Myrtle. "I'll have you know I'm a lady! A hamadryad."

The drunk stared at Julius Margate's body.

"I wouldn't admit such a thing," he declared, passionately.

"What's wrong with that?" Myrtle flung back. "Some of my best friends are hamadryads! And if you don't stop annoying me—I'll have my girl friend throw her head at you!"

The drunk drew back in panic.

Mr. Simpkins, in Jory's body, stalked over to the scene and quickly led Myrtle away in time to prevent mayhem.

Jory, in Mr. Simpkin's body, quietly left the room.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Miss Terioso advancing on me. I kicked Trina's waxen shin.

"Keep quiet from now on," I ordered. "Nearly had a riot as it is. Now I'll steer Miss Terioso away from here before she recognizes you."

I turned, bowed to the advancing witch.

"Let's dance," I suggested.

I danced with the witch on the night-club floor, while my window dummy sweetheart regarded me with a smouldering light in her lovely glass eyes.

8. One Man's Meat Is Another's Man's Corpse

FORTUNATELY, I was dancing and didn't see the scene in the outer bar. But I heard about it later—plenty.

Mr. Simpkins, in Jory's body, had retired to the bar for a quiet and meditative drink.

"What'll it be?" asked the bartender.

"Got any bl—give me Scotch," said Mr. Simpkins, quickly erasing his original thought.

The Scotch arrived. Simpkins paid for it with a $20 bill.

The sight of the greenback fluttering in the breeze acted as an unwitting signal to a tall blonde draped over the end of the bar. She uncoiled herself and advanced sinuously on Mr. Simpkins.

"You look sad, Mister," she observed. "Are you lonesome?"

This remarkable technique overpowered Mr. Simpkins quite completely. He was pretty unworldly, being a supernatural entity.

"I am sad," he sighed.

"Tell Olga what the matter is," coaxed the blonde, summoning the bartender and ordering a Silver Fizz. "Why are you sad?"

"Well," breathed Mr. Simpkins, "I used to be a vampire, but I'm not any more."

Olga blinked. This stranger was pretty drunk.

"You know how it is," he mournfully observed. "I'm hungry for blood. Now all I get is dog biscuits."

"Say," said Olga, perturbed. "Who do you think you're kidding? That's a funny line for a guy to hand out to a girl. You look like a wolf to me."

This was definitely the wrong thing to say.

"I am a wolf," muttered Mr. Simpkins.

"What do you mean, you're a wolf?" laughed Olga, back on familiar territory again. "You've got to show me, brother!"

Mr. Simpkins, naive soul, sighed.

"Right here?" he asked.

"Sure. Why not?"

"All right," said Mr. Simpkins. "I'll show you."

He descended from his bar stool and crouched on the floor. He threw his head back and began to whimper. Suddenly his body seemed to quiver. A plastic horripilation coursed through his frame. His forehead melted to a slant. His nose lengthened. His arms and legs furred.

Mr. Simpkins turned into a werewolf on the barroom floor.

Olga saw and was convinced. She was so convinced she began to scream.

About that time, Miss Terioso and I were dancing near the doorway. Miss Terioso heard the scream and turned her head.

She looked out.

Her gaze was not attracted by Mr. Simpkins, but by Jory. He stood at the checking counter, and he was grabbing Miss Terioso's broom.

"Come on," gasped my dancing-partner, running off the floor.

"Where are you going with my broomstick?" she yelled at the fleeing Jory.

"I'm just borrowing it to use outside," he called. "Don't forget, Margate is in Gerymanx's body out there."

"Come back here," yelled the witch, leaping after him.

Hell broke loose with a vengeance.

Miss Terioso clawed at Jory. She beat the poor man over the head with her broomstick, uttering shrill imprecations.

A flying form launched past me as I wavered in the doorway.

It was Trina, in the window dummy's body. She hurled herself on Miss Terioso, valiantly coming to Jory's aid.

Miss Terioso turned.

Before I could intervene, she grappled with the red-headed dummy. Before the eyes of the shrieking spectators, she tore the window dummy apart, literally limb from limb.

A torso, a head, and pairs of arms and legs fell to the floor.

Behind me came another scream. I turned in time to see Myrtle, in Margate's body, exchanging wild blows with the drunk from the next table.

"Good God, what next?" I gasped.

I started toward the howling wolf on the floor. Then something thundered past me from the outer door.

Margate, in the body of the centaur, charged into the night-club lobby. Squirming in his arms was the mermaid—Gerymanx. Stamping his hoofs, the terrible apparition, bearing its hideous burden, roared down the bar.

"What is all this?" boomed Margate, flicking his tail and neighing wildly.

Arms encircled me. I turned to face Miss Terioso, brandishing her broomstick.

"Let's get out of here, eh?" she panted. "Get on the broomstick before it's too late."

I mounted in a daze.

The howling wolf, the prancing centaur, the fighting man, and the dismembered body of the window dummy blocked our path. We sailed over them all.

Sailed over them—and into the arms of the police!

9. A Judge Loses His Judgment

JUDGE NUMBOTTOM heard the story. First he heard it from the drunk who insulted Myrtle. Then he heard it from Olga the come-on girl. After that he got a few stumbling sentences out of me.

Finally he listened to Patrolman Lossowitz as he explained the whole thing, from ghastly beginning to untimely end.

"So she says she's a tree, Your Honor," mumbled Lossowitz, unemotionally. "Meanwhile out in the bar this guy is telling Olga he used to be a vampire but now he's a werewolf. And he turns into a wolf.

"Meanwhile the witch tears this other woman to bits, and then the centaur and the mermaid run in, and the witch tries to beat it on a broomstick with this guy here."

Lossowitz pointed to me.

Judge Numbottom pointed to Lossowitz. His face was purple and he could hardly speak. The veins bulged on his bald forehead.

"Stop that kind of talk," he gasped, weakly. "After all, this is a night court, not a bedtime story session. I'm a grown man, Lossowitz, am I not?"

"Yes, Your Honor," said Lossowitz, meekly.

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, you're not," Lossowitz declared, uncertainly.

"Shut up! You can't think straight or talk straight! Admit you were drinking in this night club!"

"No, Your Honor. Not a drop."

"You don't drink drops, I realize that. Probably a bottle," decided the terrible old man. "But drunk or sober, you couldn't see such things. Bring in the prisoners, Lossowitz, and let me question them myself."

Obediently, Patrolman Lossowitz marched out and returned with Myrtle, Trina, Margate, Gerymanx, Jory, and Mr. Simpkins in tow. Miss Terioso marched before them, indignantly waving her broomstick.

Judge Numbottom took one look at the man, the centaur, the window dummy, the mermaid, the second man, and the wolf. Then he hid his face in his hands.

"No, no!" he murmured. "Cover them up. Lossowitz! Get blankets and at least cover some of them up. That horse-thing and that human fish, anyway!"

It was a matter of minutes before Judge Numbottom raised his haggard face. He winced as he stared at the motley assemblage. Finally his eyes lighted on Miss Terioso as the most attractive and normal-looking prisoner.

"Will you pleae step forward and answer a few questions," he said, controlling his voice.

Miss Terioso advanced.

"Your name?"

"Miss Terioso."

"Your—your occupation?"

"Oh," she replied lightly. "I'm just a witch."

Judge Numbottom began to turn purple again. "I beg your pardon," he rasped. "I must have misunderstood you."

"I'm just a witch, Your Honor," she said. "I ride broomsticks."

"Go on," sighed the Judge. "You nauseate me strangely."

"Well, it all started when these people turned into statues," said Miss Terioso.

"Statues?"

"Yes. Marble. Stone, you know. They're all statues, really."

"Looks like a statue-tory offense," put in Lossowitz, unhelpfully.

"I don't understand," sighed the Judge.

"This man can confirm my story," said Miss Terioso, pointing her broomstick at me.

"That's right," I answered. "These people were once statues, in my charge. But as you see, they've undergone a change, Your Honor. That's simple enough. I haven't got all my marble statues any more."

"You haven't got all your marbles any more, you mean!" snarled Judge Numbottom. "Step down, you two. You're driving me crazy!"

Margate, in Gerymanx's body, sidled forward.

"Let me help you," he suggested. "I owned these people before they were statues."

JUDGE NUMBOTTOM looked at the horse's body protruding from under the blanket. He favored Margate with a long, painful scrutiny.

"Who and what are you?" he whispered.

"I'm a centaur."

Lossowitz interfered again. "The guy is lying, Your Honor!" he bawled, excitedly. "He ain't no centaur. I seen lots of centaurs when I was in Washington!"

"Shut up!" thundered the Judge. "Let me speak to the others."

He addressed the mermaid in the centaur's arms.

"What about you, young lady?" he asked, forcing a smile. "What is the rea-

son for your—ah—piscatorial disguise?"

"Who are you calling a lady?" snarled the voice of Gerymanx from the mermaid's body. "And what kind of a fishy remark are you making about me being piscatorial?"

Judge Numbottom was sorry he started the whole thing.

"Can't any of you talk sense?" he begged.

"Let me help you," said Jory, from Mr. Simpkins' body. "It's very simple. You see, I used to be in that body over there."

He pointed at the wolf form now worn by Mr. Simpkins.

"You were in the body of that animal?" Judge Numbottom's eyes started from their sockets.

"Why not?" piped the wolf.

"A talking wolf?" moaned the Judge.

"Well, if it disturbs you so much," sniffed the wolf. He bent forward and began to go through contortions. It was a fascinating if repulsive spectacle. Slowly, the wolf turned into a man.

"You see?" he asked.

"I don't want to see!" groaned Judge Numbottom.

"Then look at her!" suggested Lossowitz, pointing at Trina in the body of the red-headed window dummy.

The window dummy was red-headed no longer. With a clatter, the dummy's head dropped to the floor.

"So sorry," said Trina. "Looking at a sight like that wolf is enough to make anyone lose their head."

She stooped and picked up her head slowly.

Judge Numbottom's eyes were almost resting on his cheekbones.

"It's sorcery," he sobbed. "Sheer black sorcery! And how can I press a sorcery charge at election time?"

I stepped up.

"Listen, Your Honor," I whispered. "I think I have a way to straighten this matter out. Never mind getting the story straight. I know a way to restore these people to their rightful forms. Then we can forget the whole thing."

"How?" gasped the Judge.

Briefly, I told him about Miss Terioso holding a due bill on hell. She could evoke a demon and order him to restore my friends to their rightful shapes.

"Incredible," objected the Judge.

"No more incredible than what you've seen here," I reminded him.

"Why doesn't she do it, then?" he asked.

"She's stubborn. I suggest that you force her to do it."

"How?"

"Issue a court order commanding her to evoke the demon and make the change."

The Judge sat up.

His eyes flashed fire. "I'll damned well issue the order," he snapped. "If not, I'll have the lot of you jailed for the rest of your unnatural lives."

10. Marbles Never Cease

"HAVE you got your due-bill on hell ready?" I whispered nervously, crouching next to Miss Terioso in the darkened courtroom.

"It's right here in my satchel," replied the witch. During the past hour her glamor had fallen away, and she was once again the familiar crone-like figure, as she puttered around making passes in the air.

Judge Numbottom had ejected the drunk, the come-on girl, and Patrolman Lossowitz from the chamber, leaving us in privacy.

A bailiff had been dispatched to secure the ingredients Miss Terioso required for the ceremony of the ritual, and now she went through the parody of the Black Mass and the moment for evoking the demon neared.

My fine finned and furry friends moved

restlessly to and fro as her voice rose in awesome crescendo.

The climax came.

Amidst a shaking of walls and a rumbling of far-off vortices between the stars, the red demon slithered into tri-dimensional being in the center of Judge Numbottom's court.

A gasp rose from the assemblage.

"To think of me, acting as an accessory in this black magic," hissed Judge Numbottom morosely. "Oh, Lord—what's that?"

He saw the demon.

So did my friends.

The demon stretched a rubbery red neck and blinked with nyctaloptic eyes.

"It's you again," he growled, squatting near me.

I shrugged. "Not at all. This lady called you."

I indicated Miss Terioso, who nodded. The witch swept commandingly before the creature of darkness.

In low tones she conversed with the entity.

"You want me to switch them?" the demon asked.

"Yes."

"And you have a paper entitling you to—ah—services?"

"Here it is."

Miss Terioso fluttered a piece of paper.

"Very well," sighed the demon. "Here goes."

He paused. "I shall have to freeze them into marble again before I unscramble their psyches," he said.

"Very well."

"Don't worry," I told Trina, moving close to her. "It will just be a minute."

That is all it took, and I was glad.

For my very spine shook at the violence of the psychic force that concentrated itself in the room.

Gazing through the phosphorescence of the chalk lines, I saw a horribly unnatural transformation. Men, mermaid, centaur, and wolf, turned to gleaming white stone. They froze in marble attitudes on the floor.

"So," breathed the demon. He was sweating horribly, as sparks rising from his body attested.

"Now for the second step," he muttered. "But give me the due bill first."

His voice addressed the witch. But his eyes couldn't reach her.

It was I who finally located Miss Terioso in the darkness. She stood by the window, the open window, and she was already bestriding the broomstick.

"She's not going through with the deal!" I yelled. "She's double-crossing us and making a getaway!"

It was true.

The demon realized it instantly.

"Come back!" he shouted.

"Farewell!" called the witch.

She rose in midair.

The demon, like a gigantic rubber ball, bounded after her.

He soared, with dynamic propulsion, through the window.

I rushed over to the ledge and peered outside.

Hovering in midair, witch and demon clawed wildly in writhing tangle of arms and legs. She was trying to hold on to the piece of paper. He enfolded her in his red arms, hissing.

The broomstick wobbled violently.

SUDDENLY came a cataclysmic crash of thunder, a burst of eye-ball searing luminance, and then—nothing.

Witch and demon were gone.

The charred handle of a broomstick fell to clatter in the courtyard below.

It was over. I turned wearily to face the marble statues of what were once my friends.

Now they were statues again, statues forevermore.

"Trina," I whispered.

A lifeless window dummy stared at me with glassy eyes. Arms were still outstretched in entreaty, but their embrace was cold.

Judge Numbottom switched on the lights.

He rubbed his eyes.

"It is the order of this court," he whispered, "that these statues be confiscated. Immediately. And taken out of sight. Not a word of this must get out. You understand?"

I nodded.

"Julius Margate's house will be put up for sale under court order," he added.

"The window dummy?" I whispered.

"Will await claim by rightful owners," he told me. "Sorry, my friend. You'd better go now."

I went. What else could I do?

And so it ended. I left Margate, his friends, and his house. And now I try to forget.

Of course, I still see the window dummy every day.

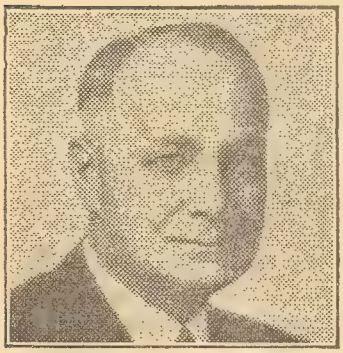
That's all I have left, you know. All I have to prove that it really happened.

So I see the window dummy every day. And you can come and see her yourself if you like.

She's the third one from the left—in our biggest department store window.

"I TALKED WITH GOD"

(Yes, I Did ––– Actually and Literally)



Dr. Frank B. Robinson

and as a result of talking with God, there was disclosed to me what is the most remarkable spiritual discovery of the ages. I discovered that in every man and woman there lives the most dynamic spiritual Power this world can ever know. So dynamic, and so fraught with tremendous possibilities is this Power, that its existence in you will amaze you with what It can do for you right here on earth.

For, being the Power of Almighty God, it possesses all the wisdom, all the ingenuity, all the intelligence there is in the universe. It is only limited by your ability to recognize and use it. You are living in complete ignorance of the staggering fact that when the Almighty created the human race, He ordained it so that we all can draw fully upon, and use, the Power of God himself. This is the greatest spiritual discovery of all time.

Try and imagine what such limitless Power can do in your life. Think what your life would be like now, had you discovered this scintillating Power of God twenty or thirty years ago. Could there be any material or spiritual lack in your life now? Of course there couldn't. You may have often suspected that such a Power is available to you, but you never suspected that it already exists in you, instantly available, and ready to spring into action the moment you need it. Well, this is the truth. This is our new discovery of how the Spirit of God operates in life. God knew what He was doing when He placed such a Power in you. Your duty is to discover the existence of this Power and use It.

The whole story cannot be told here. But you send us a post-card with your name and address on it, and free information will be sent you by return mail. Send the post-card to "Psychiana" Inc., Dept. 126, Moscow, Idaho. May we suggest that you do not delay? If such a Power is available to you, you want it. So mail the card for free information now. The address again is "Psychiana" Inc., Dept. 126, Moscow, Idaho. (Copyright 1943 "Psychiana" Inc.)

N.B. Collier's Weekly, Time, Newsweek, American Mercury, Pic, Magazine, Digest and scores of other periodicals have given free publicity to this Movement. This new discovery of the Power of God is a very dynamic thing, as you will probably discover, so write now.

The Geezenstacks

ONE of the strange things about it was that Aubrey Walters wasn't at all a strange little girl. She was quite as ordinary as her father and mother, who lived in an apartment on Otis Street, and who played bridge one night a week, went out somewhere another night, and spent the other evenings quietly at home.

Aubrey was nine, and had rather stringy hair and freckles, but at nine one never worries about such things. She got along quite well in the not-too-expensive private school to which her parents sent her, she made friends easily and readily with other children, and she took lessons on a three-quarter-size violin and played it abominably.

Her greatest fault, possibly, was her predeliction for staying up late of nights, and that was the fault of her parents, really, for letting her stay up and dressed until she felt sleepy and wanted to go to bed. Even at five and six, she seldom went to bed before ten o'clock in the evening. And if, during a period of maternal concern, she was put to bed earlier, she never went to sleep anyway. So why not let the child stay up?

Now, at nine years, she stayed up quite as late as her parents did, which was about eleven o'clock of ordinary nights and later when they had company for bridge, or went out for the evening. Then it was later, for they usually took her along. Aubrey enjoyed it, whatever it was. She'd sit still as a mouse in a seat at the theater, or regard them with little-girl seriousness over the rim of a glass of ginger ale while they had a cocktail or two at a night club. She took the noise and the music and the dancing with big-eyed wonder and enjoyed every minute of it.

Sometimes Uncle Richard, her mother's brother, went along with them. She and Uncle Richard were good friends. It was Uncle Richard who gave her the dolls.

"Funny thing happened today," he'd said. "I'm walking down Rodgers Place, past the Mariner Building—you know, Edith; it's where Doc Howard used to have his office—and something thudded on the sidewalk right behind me. And I turned around, and there was this package."

"This package" was a white box a little larger than a shoe box, and it was rather strangely tied with gray ribbon. Sam Walters, Aubrey's father, looked at it curiously.

"Doesn't look dented," he said. "Couldn't have fallen out of a very high window. Was it tied up like that that?"

"Just like that. I put the ribbon back on after I opened it and looked in. Oh, I don't mean I opened it then or there. I just stopped and looked up to see who'd dropped it—thinking I'd see somebody looking out of a window. But nobody was, and I picked up the box. It had something in it, not very heavy, and the box and the ribbon looked like—well, not like something somebody'd throw away on purpose. So I stood looking up, and nothing happened, so I shook the box a little and—"

"All right, all right," said Sam Walters. "Spare us the blow-by-blow. You didn't find out who dropped it?"

"Right. And I went up as high as the fourth floor, asking the people whose win-

The strangest things always happen to the most ordinary people . . . and that's what makes it strange!

Heading by
FRED HUMISTON

By
FREDRIC BROWN

dows were over the place where I picked it up. They were all home, as it happened, and none of them had ever seen it. I thought it might have fallen off a window ledge. But—"

"What's in it, Dick?" Edith asked.

"Dolls. Four of them. I brought them over this evening for Aubrey. If she wants them."

He untied the package, and Aubrey said, "Oooo, Uncle Richard. They're—they're *lovely.*"

Sam said, "Hm. Those look almost more like mannikins than dolls, Dick. The way they're dressed, I mean. Must have cost several dollars apiece. Are you sure the owner won't turn up."

RICHARD shrugged. "Don't see how he can. As I told you, I went up four floors, asking. Thought from the look of the box and the sound of the thud, it couldn't have come from even that high. And after I opened it, well—look—" He picked up one of the dolls and held it out for Sam Walter's inspection.

"Wax. The heads and hands, I mean. And not one of them cracked. It couldn't have fallen from higher than the second story. Even then, I don't see how—" He shrugged again.

"They're the Geezenstacks," said Audrey.

"Huh?" Sam asked.

"I'm going to call them the Geezenstacks," Audrey said. "Look, this one is Papa Geezenstack and this one is Mama Geezenstack, and the little girl one—that's—that's Aubrey Geezenstack. And the other man one, we'll call him Uncle Geezenstack. The little girl's uncle."

Sam chuckled. "Like us, eh? But if Uncle—uh—Geezenstack is Mama Geezenstack's brother, like Uncle Richard is Mama's brother, then his name wouldn't be Geezenstack."

"Just the same, it is," Aubrey said. "They're all Geezenstacks. Papa, will you buy me a house for them?"

"A doll house? Why—" He'd started to say, "Why, sure," but caught his wife's eye and remembered. Aubrey's birthday was only a week off and they'd been wondering what to get her. He changed it hastily to "Why, I don't know. I'll think about it."

IT WAS a beautiful doll house. Only one story high, but quite elaborate, and with a roof that lifted off so one could rearrange the furniture and move the dolls from room to room. It scaled well with the mannikins Uncle Richard had brought.

Aubrey was rapturous. All her other playthings went into eclipse and the doings of the Geezenstacks occupied most of her waking thoughts.

It wasn't for quite a while that Sam Walters began to notice, and to think about, the strange aspect of the doings of the Geezenstacks. At first, with a quiet chuckle at the coincidences that followed one another.

And then, with a puzzled look in his eyes.

It wasn't until quite a while later that he got Richard off into a corner. The four of them had just returned from a play. He said, "Uh—Dick."

"Yeah, Sam?"

"Those dolls, Dick. Where *did* you get them?"

Richard's eyes stared at him blankly. "What do you mean, Sam? I told you where I got them."

"Yes, but—you weren't kidding, or anything? I mean, maybe you bought them for Aubrey, and thought we'd object if you gave her such an expensive present, so you—uh—"

"No, honest, I didn't"

"But dammit, Dick, they couldn't have fallen out of a window, or dropped out, and not broken. They're wax. Couldn't

someone walking behind you—or going by in an auto or something—?"

"There wasn't anyone around, Sam. Nobody at all. I've wondered about it myself. But if I was lying, I wouldn't make up a screwy story like that, would I? I'd just say I found them on a park bench or a seat in a movie. But why are you curious?"

"I—uh—I just got to wondering."

Sam Walters kept on wondering, too.

They were little things, most of them. Like the time Aubrey had said, "Papa Geezenstack didn't go to work this morning. He's in bed, sick."

"So?" Sam had asked. "And what is wrong with the gentleman?"

"Something he ate, I guess."

And the next morning, at breakfast, "And how is Mr. Geezenstack, Aubrey?"

"A little better, but he isn't going to work today yet, the doctor said. Tomorrow, maybe."

And the next day, Mr. Geezenstack went back to work. That, as it happened, was the day Sam Walters came home feeling quite ill, as a result of something he'd eaten for lunch. Yes, he'd missed two days from work. The first time he'd missed work on account of illness in several years.

AND some things were quicker than that, and some slower. You couldn't put our finger on it and say, "Well, if this happens to the Geeeznstacks, it will happen to us in twenty-four hours." Sometimes it was less than an hour. Sometimes as long as a week.

"Mama and Papa Geezenstack had a quarrel today."

And Sam had tried to avoid that quarrel with Edith, but it seemed he just couldn't. He'd been quite late getting home, through no fault of his own. It had happened often, but this time Edith took exception. Soft answers failed to turn away wrath, and at last he'd lost his own temper.

"Uncle Geezenstack is going away for a visit." Richard hadn't been out of town for years, but the next week he took a sudden notion to run down to New York. "Pete and Amy, you know. Got a letter from them asking me—"

"When?" Sam asked, almost sharply. "When did you get the letter?"

"Yesterday."

"Then last week you weren't— This sounds like a silly question, Dick, but last week were you thinking about going anywhere? Did you say anything to—to anyone about the possibility of your visiting someone?"

"Lord, no. Hadn't even thought about Pete and Amy for months, till I got their letter yesterday. Want me to stay a week."

"You'll be back in three days—maybe," Sam had said. He wouldn't explain, even when Richard did come back in three days. It sounded just too damn silly to say that he'd known how long Richard was going to be gone, because that was how long Uncle Geezenstack had been away.

Sam Walters began to watch his daughter, and to wonder. She, of course, was the one who made the Geezenstacks do whatever they did. Was it possible that Aubrey had some strange preternatural insight which caused her, unconsciously, to predict things that were going to happen to the Walters and to Richard?

He didn't, of course, believe in clairvoyance. But was Aubrey clairvoyant?"

"Mrs. Geezenstack's going shopping today. She's going to buy a new coat."

That one almost sounded like a put-up job. Edith had smiled at Aubrey and then looked at Sam. "That reminds me, Sam. Tomorrow I'll be downtown, and there's a sale at —"

"But, Edith, these are war times. And you don't *need* a coat."

He'd argued so earnestly that he made himself late for work. Arguing uphill, because he really could afford the coat and she really hadn't bought one for two years. But he couldn't explain that the real reason he didn't want her to buy one was that Mrs. Geezen— Why, it was too silly to say, even to herself.

Edith bought the coat.

Strange, Sam thought, that nobody else noticed those coincidences. But Richard wasn't around all the time, and Edith—well, Edith had the knack of listening to Aubrey's prattle without hearing nine-tenths of it.

"Aubrey Geezenstack brought home her report card today, Papa. She got ninety in arithmetic and eighty in spelling and—"

And two days later, Sam was calling up the headmaster of the school. Calling from a pay-station, of course, so nobody would hear him. "Mr. Bradley, I'd like to ask a question that I have a—uh—rather peculiar, but important, reason for asking. Would it be possible for a student at your school to know in advance exactly what grades . . ."

No, not possible. The teachers themselves didn't know, until they'd figured averages, and that hadn't been done until the morning the report cards were made out, and sent home. Yes, yesterday morning, while the children had their play period.

"Sam," Richard said, "you're looking kind of seedy. Business worries? Look, things are going to get better from now on, and with your company, you got nothing to worry about anyway."

"That isn't it, Dick. It—I mean, there isn't anything I'm worrying about. Not exactly. I mean—" And he'd had to wriggle out of the cross-examination by inventing a worry or two for Richard to talk him out of.

He thought about the Geezenstacks a lot. Too much. If only he'd been superstitious, or credulous, it might not have been so bad. But he *wasn't*. That's why each succeeding coincidence hit him a little harder than the last.

Edith and her brother noticed it, and talked about it when Sam wasn't around.

"He *has* been acting queer lately, Dick. I'm—I'm really worried. He acts so—Do you think we could talk him into seeing a doctor or a—"

"A psychiatrist? Um, if we could. But I can't see him doing it, Edith. Something's eating him, and I've tried to pump him about it, but he won't open up. Y'know—I think it's got something to do with those damn dolls."

"Dolls? You mean Aubrey's dolls. The ones you gave her?"

"Yes, the Geezenstacks. He sits and stares at the dollhouse. I've heard him ask the kid questions about them, and he was *serious*. I think he's got some delusion or something about them. Or centering on them."

"But, Dick, that's—*awful*."

"Look, Edie, Aubrey isn't as interested in them as she used to be, and— Is there anything she wants very badly?"

"Dancing lessons. But she's already studying violin and I don't think we can let her—"

"Do you think if you promised her dancing lessons if she gave up those dolls, she'd be willing? I think we've got to get them out of the apartment. And I don't want to hurt Aubrey, so—"

"Well—but what would we tell Aubrey?"

"Tell *her* I know a poor family with children who haven't any dolls at all. And —I think she'll agree, if you make it strong enough."

"But Dick, what will we tell Sam?" He'll know better than that."

"Tell Sam, when Audrey isn't around, that you think she's getting too old for dolls, and that—tell him she's taking an

unhealthy interest in them, and that the doctor advises— That sort of stuff."

Aubrey wasn't enthusiastic. She was not as engrossed in the Geezenstacks as she'd been when they were newer, but couldn't she have both the dolls *and* the dancing lessons?

"I don't think you'd have time for both, honey. And there are these poor children who haven't *any* dolls to play with, and you ought to feel sorry for them."

And Aubrey weakened, eventually. Dancing school didn't open for ten days, though, and she wanted to keep the dolls until she could start her lessons. There was argument, but to no avail.

"That's all right, Edie," Richard told her. "Ten days is better than not at all, and—well, if she doesn't give them up voluntarily, it'll start a rumpus and Sam'll find out what we're up to. You haven't mentioned anything to him at all, have you?"

"No. But maybe it would make him feel better to know they were—"

"I wouldn't. We don't know just what it is about them that fascinates or repels him. Wait till it happens, and then tell him Aubrey has already given them away. Or *he* might raise some objection or want to keep them. If I get them out of the place first, he can't."

"You're right, Dick. And Aubrey won't tell him, because I told her the dancing lessons are going to be a surprise for her father, and she can't tell him what's going to happen to the dolls without telling the other side of the deal."

"Swell, Edith."

It might have been better if Sam had known. Or maybe everything would have happened just the same, if he had.

POOR Sam. He had a bad moment the very next evening. One of Aubrey's friends from school was there, and they were playing with the dollhouse. Sam watching them, trying to look less interested than he was. Edith was knitting and Richard, who had just come in, was reading the paper.

Only Sam was listening to the children and heard the suggestion.

". . . and then let's have a play funeral, Aubrey. Just pretend one of them is—"

Sam Walters let out a sort of strangled cry and almost fell getting across the room.

There was a bad moment, then, but Edith and Richard managed to pass it off casually enough, outwardly. Edith discovered it was time for Aubrey's little friend to leave, and she exchanged a significant glance with Richard and they both escorted the girl to the door.

Whispered, "Dick, did you *see—?*"

"Something *is* wrong, Edie. Maybe we shouldn't wait. After all, Aubrey has agreed to give them up, and—"

Back in the living room, Sam was still breathing a bit hard. Aubrey looked at him almost as though she was afraid of him. It was the first time she'd ever looked at him like that, and Sam felt ashamed. He said, "Honey, I'm sorry I— But listen, you'll promise me you'll *never* have a play funeral for one of your dolls? Or pretend one of them is badly sick or has an accident—or anything bad at all? Promise?"

"Sure, Papa. I'm—I'm going to put them away for tonight."

She put the lid on the dollhouse and went back toward the kitchen.

In the hallway, Edie said, "I'll—I'll get Aubrey alone and fix it with her. You talk to Sam. Tell him—look, let's go out tonight, go somewhere and get him away from everything. See if he will."

Sam was still staring at the dollhouse.

"Let's get some excitement, Sam," Richard said. "How's about going out

somewhere? We've been sticking too close to home. It'll do us good."

Sam took a deep breath. "Okay, Dick. If you say so. I—I could use a little fun, I guess."

Edie came back with Aubrey, and she winked at her brother. "You men go on downstairs and get a cab from the stand around the corner. Aubrey and I'll be down by the time you bring it."

Behind Sam's back, as the men were putting on their coats, Richard gave Edith an inquiring look and she nodded.

OUTSIDE, there was a heavy fog; one could see only a few yards ahead. Sam insisted that Richard wait at the door for Edith and Aubrey while he went to bring the cab. The woman and girl came down just before Sam got back.

Richard asked, "Did you—?"

"Yes, Dick. I was going to throw them away, but I gave them away instead. That way they're *gone;* he might have wanted to hunt in the rubbish and find them if I'd just thrown—"

"Gave them away? To whom?"

"Funniest thing, Dick. I opened the door and there was an old woman going by in the back hall. Don't know which of the apartments she came from, but she must be a scrubwoman or something, although she looked like a witch really, but when she saw those dolls I had in my hands—"

"Here comes the cab," Dick said. "You gave them to her?"

"Yes, it was funny. She said, *'Mine? To keep? Forever?'* Wasn't that a strange way of asking it? But I laughed and said, 'Yes, ma'am. Yours forev—' "

She broke off, for the shadowy outline of the taxi was at the curb, and Sam opened the door and called out, "Come on, folks!"

Aubrey skipped across the sidewalk into the cab, and the others followed. It started.

The fog was thicker now. They could not see out the windows at all. It was as though a gray wall pressed against the glass, as though the world outside was gone, completely and utterly. Even the windshield, from where they sat, was a gray blank.

"How can he drive so fast?" Richard asked, and there was an edge of nervousness in his voice. "By the way, where are we going, Sam?"

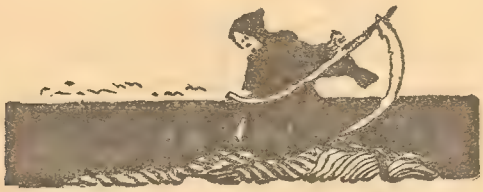
"By George," Sam said. "I forgot to tell her."

"Her?"

"Yeah. Woman driver. They've got them all over now. I'll—"

He leaned forward and tapped on the glass, and the woman turned.

Edith saw her face, and screamed. They were all being driven into the black fog by the very old creature to whom she had given the dolls—*to be hers to keep forever.*



Baynter's Imp

Which would get him first—money or women? Nobody knew about the imp.

By AUGUST DERLETH

Heading by JOHN GIUNTA

CYRIL BAYNTER was one of the more obnoxious men about town. He liked to think of himself as an elegant dandy, but, thanks to a hearty appetite and the wherewithal to gratify it, his dream version of himself was several degrees removed from reality. He was a great hand with the ladies, naturally, what

with his car and the money he had inherited from his grandfather, a lumber baron from the middle west who had made his pile by the simple expedient of devastating the forests—on his own ten acre pieces as well as on all the acreage surrounding them and belonging to absentee owners.

Cyril had some of the old man's rapacity, but lacked his energy.

He liked to think that it was his lack of energy which was responsible for the lukewarm way in which Belle Fassett treated him. This was woeful self-deception, but then, Cyril was a master of that. His friends wagered persistently that money and/or women would ultimately get Cyril into trouble.

However, it was neither. It was his curiosity.

Cyril loved to gratify his curiosity, just as long as it did not involve too much effort on his part. He had once, in an idle moment, dreamed of being a sort of keyhole reporter for Chicago, a la Winchell, but this, like so many other dreams Cyril had had, never materialized. He satisfied his curiosity in various ways; he dug up choice morsels about his friends and exhibited them at awkward moments—which was not calculated to endear him; he rummaged around in old newspaper files, but there he usually became so interested in the comics that he soon forgot his purpose; and he bought up sealed trunks and boxes at auctions.

At one of these he became the possessor of a trunk which had in it nothing whatever but a single bottle, of old glass, packed with as much care as if it were destined to be shipped on a trip around the world and its owner was taking no chances on its breaking.

It was rather a carafe than a bottle, of dark blue glass, and, when held up to the light, did not seem to contain anything. Nonetheless, it was sealed very firmly, not with a cork but with a lead stopper which was kept down by other lead melted over the stopper and the entire upper neck of the bottle. Moreover, on all this there had been inscribed a great many cabalistic designs, including many a warning in Latin, Greek, and a language Cyril could not read, that the bottle must not be opened on pain of the punishment of seven hells and the like.

Naturally, Cyril opened it at once.

IF he expected a manifestation of some kind, he was disappointed. The bottle was empty. Much to his disgust it did not even contain a smell. He put it on the mantel of his studio—for he made a pretense at being an artist and, since he could do nothing else, having neither sense of form nor of color, splashed paint on canvases and called himself a Surrealist. Occasionally a gullible critic who knew no more about what he was doing than Cyril did let out vague hints that perhaps Baynter had something—this was just to be on the safe side, in case he had; but on the whole there were not many people stupid enough to be taken in by what Cyril called his "art."

There the bottle rested for two days without any further thought being given to it. As a matter of fact, Cyril did not enter his studio for two days thereafter, and when he did enter it, he was in a cold rage because it looked very much as if Bert Trayle was going to cut him out with Belle. He had long suspected that Belle preferred Bert, even if Bert did not have money or social position, but it was becoming plainer now that Belle had broken an engagement and left him to think that he had been thrust aside in favor of Bert.

Candidly, it was enough to put anyone in a temper, even someone less vain than Cyril. He came into his studio, plumped himself into a chair, and sulked.

Out of this sulk he was abruptly aroused by a not unpleasant voice inquiring, "Can I be of any assistance?"

He looked up, he looked around, he saw no one.

"Right over here, Fish-eyes."

The voice came from the mantel. Cyril looked in that direction and away again; then he looked back. Was it smoke or a fog on his glasses that made the top of the blue bottle seem clouded? He got up and went over to the mantel.

It was not fog.

It was a quite reasonably distinct miniature of a man, about a foot high, unclothed, but wearing a pair of horns and a forked tail.

"Good God!" exclaimed Cyril involuntarily, whereupon the creature grimaced.

"There's no need to be offensive," he said.

"Where did you come from?"

"Out of the bottle. I'm the imp who lived in it. Spent nine hundred years there until you let me out the other day. Why, it took two whole days to materialize again —I was so much out of practice."

Cyril blinked, closed his eyes, rubbed his hands over them; in short, he did all the conventional things, but when he looked again, the imp was still very much there, save only for the faintly disturbing circumstance that he could be seen through. Indeed, he was really not more than half visible.

"I asked you before whether I could be of any help?"

Cyril replied that he did not think so. Nothing could change Belle's mind. But if something were to happen to Trayle—! Now, there was an idea! It struck him amidships and he turned to the imp to expound it, but the imp had gone.

A little shakily, Cyril returned to his chair to brood about his sanity. Like most hypochondriacs, he had the habit of looking at every disturbing symptom in its worst possible light. There was nothing the matter with the bottle at all. He made a note to have the stopper repaired, so that he might use it, if occasion demanded, and went to take an aspirin. What a thing to happen him! What an hallucination! Fortunately, there was no one else in the room, or he might have been hard put to it to offer a suitable explanation.

DURING the night he thought someone whispered into his ear that the matter had been attended to. He sat up and looked blearily around, but he was much too tired to investigate what must certainly have been a dream, and went to sleep again.

He slept until noon. Then he had breakfast in bed.

In the course of breakfast, he learned via the morning paper that Herbert Trayle had been fished out of the Chicago River; he had apparently driven over the open Michigan Avenue Bridge. No one had any explanation of how it had happened; Trayle had had a drink or two, but was certainly not in any sense of the word high.

Cyril was not so obtuse as to think this a coincidence. He went directly to his studio and over to the bottle on the mantel.

"Imp!" he said, somewhat uncertainly.

He heard someone yawning; it seemed to come out of the bottle. There was an imprecation for people who interrupted the sleep of others. And then the imp appeared, flowing up out of the bottle like a faint haze of smoke and taking shape. He sat there with his legs crossed and contemplated his long, thin fingers.

"Did you do this?" asked Cyril pointing to the story in the paper.

The imp smiled. "A little awkward—but I managed," he said modestly.

Cyril was not unaware of the implications and possibilities presented by the imp. In fact, there came into being at once within his thoughts a vast panorama of events which might take place; he began to feel like a hard-pressed general to whom

a new and enormously potent weapon had been granted.

Belle was, of course, the first problem.

He had no hope that the imp could change Belle's mind by direct action, but there was that kind of indirection like the elimination of the opposition which might work very well indeed. Now that Trayle was out of the way, there remained only Belle's father; the old man had opposed him, not very determinedly, to be sure, but just enough to strengthen Belle. If something were to happen to him—!

He looked speculatively at the imp, who sat with his legs crossed and his head tilted to one side, looking at him as curiously as Cyril now gazed at the inhabitant of the bottle. Cyril discovered that the imp had no difficulty reading his mind.

"Why all this bother about a woman?" inquired the imp scornfully.

Cyril tried to explain that Belle was exceptional, but the imp interrupted rudely to point out that every lovesick swain felt precisely the same way, and it was simply against the law of averages for so many exceptional women to exist. It was that way nine hundred years ago and it was the same today.

"Nevertheless, if her old man were out of the way," grumbled Cyril.

With a sound very much like a Bronx cheer, the imp vanished.

CYRIL settled down to plan his future, looking through rose-colored glasses.

He never had a pang of conscience about the unfortunate accident which had removed Belle's father so soon after Trayle's death. Of course, to Belle he oozed sympathy; if he had really felt it, he would have been hard put to it to show anything of it; but since it was simply an act, there was nothing to it. He was delicate in that he did not force himself on Belle for at least a month after her father's death, taking time out only long enough to send her a little something for remembrance from time to time.

In the second month, he began to pay her the most assiduous attention he had ever paid her in their entire acquaintance. Cyril was not without charm when he was not sulking; and now, with the importance of his money having increased since her father's death, Belle was inclined to overlook many of his obnoxious points.

In short, Belle began to look upon him with considerably more favor.

Cyril was transported. He knew that the battle was not yet won, but the first round was very definitely his. The whole thing went to his head in a very disagreeable fashion; Cyril was one of those people who believe that any stroke of luck is by nature an outgrowth of his own personality; and he went around preening and priding himself on his ability to charm so attractive a feminine morsel as Belle Fassett.

He might have forgotten all about the imp, had he not seen the bottle from time to time. The imp was far less given to visibility; he appeared very rarely; he seemed to prefer sleeping, explaining that he had got into the habit. After all, nine centuries in a bottle had left him with very little aptitude for anything else to do. On one unforgettable occasion Cyril had come upon him reading a first edition of a book by Horatio Alger (paper covers), chuckling heartily over the Alger formula, and setting forth in no uncertain terms the thesis that the people in Mr. Alger's stories had quite obviously no awareness of genuine evil.

For some reason, Cyril was disagreeably affected by this incident.

He began to think in terms of a lifetime with the imp. He would have a hard time explaining the imp and his bottle to Belle. And what would Belle think if she were to come upon the imp without warning? The more he thought about this, the more troubled he became. In the first place, it

would be impossible to explain the imp to Belle; she would simply not believe it. In the second, if she were forced to believe it, she would come to the not altogether unjustified conclusion that Cyril was leagued with the forces of darkness. In the third, the whole business might frighten her far too much for his good; and finally, if she did actually see the imp, she would probably pack up and leave him instantly.

These cogitations and reflections took Cyril an entire week, but at the end of that time, he had come to a conclusion.

The imp must go.

AFTER all, he had served his purpose, and it was time for him to be returned to the bottle and put away in a good safe place. Very likely the original owner had had good reasons for taking this course with the imp. He was not only disconcerting, but there was always that ghastly uncertainty; Cyril might very easily some day cradle the wrong kind of wish in his thoughts, and before he could stop it, the imp would have gone out and converted the wish into the fact.

No, it would never do to keep the imp.

Very slyly, Cyril had a new stopper made, and one evening he walked unconcernedly up to the bottle, with the idea of stopping it up and sealing it before the imp could escape. The plan was sound, but he had no sooner come up to the bottle than he was possessed by doubts. Was the imp in the bottle?

"Imp!" he called.

"Now what?" The voice came from the bottle.

Excellent, thought Cyril, and put the stopper into the bottle.

He should not have awakened the imp, for, once awake, the imp was instantly aware of what Cyril intended to do, and he was out of the bottle before the stopper closed his egress.

Naturally, he was outraged. He had been an obedient imp within his obvious limitations, and he had given Cyril no cause for anger.

"One thing I can't stand is ingratitude," he said.

Cyril whirled around.

It was the imp, all right.

But Cyril had very little time to think about it. Something was happening to him. It was not an unpleasant sensation, but an extremely curious one; he seemed to be shrinking in size, diminishing with breathless rapidity. Then he felt himself picked up unceremoniously and poured—that was the word; he thought of it—into the bottle. And in a flash, the stopper was in, and the creature outside was sealing it.

The creature outside had a disturbing resemblance to Cyril.

As a matter of fact, in all but spirit, it was Cyril. The imp had simply appropriated Cyril's earthly possessions, including his body, and had put Cyril in his place.

If Cyril had any doubts about his future, they were resolved very quickly. The imp in Cyril's body took the bottle outside and buried it deep in the garden.

That was the end of Cyril Baynter.

The imp, however, saw no reason why he should not live Cyril's life. He followed the Alger formula by extension, married Belle, and had a modestly successful life, with three children, born fortunately in Cyril's image and not in his—for nothing short of a miracle would have offered suitable explanation of horns and tails.

Cursed Awakening

By MANLY BANISTER

TROPIC night mantled Sanan and crowned it with the glory of moonlight. The jungle-matted slopes of the island beeped and chittered with the invisible, rustling life of tree-top and undergrowth.

In the back of Lieutenant Blaine Evest's mind, the sound was a piquant obligato overlying the diapason of the South Pacific pawing at the shingled beach, muffled by the burlap hangings in the dugout door.

The air was stale within the sand-bagged walls, the light a faint emanation from a smoky kerosene lantern turned low. Oil was precious on Sanan, precious indeed to the handful of Marines who struggled daily to hold the island from the Jap invader.

Evest was writing a letter. He had gotten as far as "Dear Gloria." He crumpled the sheet, took a fresh one, and wrote, "Gloria dearest." He frowned at what he had written, the expression etching lines of suffering on his lean, young face. Gray eyes peered pensive and brooding, slightly bloodshot, and the corners of his strong mouth drooped a little with weariness. He sighed and laid down his pen. It was impossible to concentrate on something no longer read to him. He knew no reality now except the sweltering hell of sweat and mosquitoes, the nightly plague of Jap bombs.

Six weeks on Sanan had aged him. It had been a terrible six weeks, directing the construction of an advanced airbase that some day was to serve as a jumping-off place for Jap-harrying bombers. It had taken a mighty assault in the first place to establish the beachhead, followed by two weeks of wriggling through jungle, of subsisting on K ration, of firing at flitting brown devils and being fired upon in return.

A bitter grin twisted Evest's mouth. The Japs had resisted well, but they were wiped out. And now they were still making it tough. Nightly they came over from some hidden base to the north. The Tojo Express, the Marines called it in grim jest. Six Zeros paid them a visit every night at twelve. On the dot. Precise as a timetable. The Marines had two fighters to throw into the air against them, some three-inch and twenty millimetre ack-ack, .50 and .30 calibre machine-guns — those besides the seacoast artillery batteries and a variety of special weapons. Evest, only thirty, was very young to command such a group, but one night a colonel, a major, two captains and another lieutenant had been grouped when the Zeros came over. Lieutenant Evest took over the responsibilities the moment the bomb hit.

They couldn't hold out much longer. Evest knew that, and he wondered if this was to be Bataan all over again. He creaked the lantern open and blew out its feeble flame. He thrust out through the burlap-hung doorway and hurried toward the canvas-covered leanto that served as a mess-hall.

Grant and Bronson, the Marine flying officers, were sipping coffee, hot and ran-

Deep in a submerged cavern at the bottom of the ocean live a strange people. Once they were of the race of man . . . now they are the were-folk of the sea!

cidly black. Evest spoke to them briefly, casually. Formality had died among the men on Sanan, for the men themselves expected to die shortly. Grant and Bronson put down their cups and plodded into the vine-hung mouth of a jungle path. From the partly completed airfield behind the fringe of jungle came the coughing roar of engines being warmed. Evest wriggled the tightness from his shoulders and turned to

Heading by A. R. TILBURNE

for inspection of the waiting anti-aircraft batteries.

THE drenching moonlight served both friend and enemy that night. It picked out installations with harsh outlines of shadow at the same time that it etched the enemy planes in bold relief against the sky.

Three and three they came. The scream of their six motors split the sky, and the jungle hushed. Bombs began to crump like rotten coconuts, machine-guns chattered, the anti-aircraft guns vomited flames and steel. Twenty endless minutes of scarlet, rocking Hell . . . then it was gone with two remaining Zeros that limped away to northward.

Four would never rise again from the troubled waters of the strait—nor rise again would laughing-eyed Bronson, whose fighter had described an arcing trail of smoke and flame into the jungle. Grant brought his crippled ship in with one wing dragging, caught a wobbling wheel in a newly-made bomb crater and nosed gently over. Grant went to the sick bay that served as a hospital. He had a broken leg.

Evest checked the damage with a bleak expression. Somebody had to go out into the jungle and search for Bronson. He arranged that detail and went back to the dugout.

How much longer? How many more hell-racked nights? He leaned against the wall of wet sandbags and stared seaward, cursing softly. Out there on the moon-tracked sea he expected to see a flotilla of friendly ships bringing men and supplies. But they did not come. Frustration and disappointment gripped him. He hated his job, he hated Sanan, he hated everybody and everything that might be deemed responsible for his being where he was. He flung himself into his bunk in tight-lipped fury.

Evest came awake with a feeling of unearthly weirdness. The creak of the rusted lantern-chimney had awakened him. Cragged and bearded, the face of Gunnery Sergeant Malpek was solemn in the faint light.

"What's the word, Malpek?" Evest was still half asleep.

Malpek shrugged. "You'll have to see for yourself, Lieutenant."

The burly gunner motioned toward the burlap hanging. The folds of it swept aside, and Evest's breath caught harshly in his throat. He stood up quickly.

"My God!" he said. Then, "Where did you get her?"

Two guards who had come in with the girl withdrew at a gesture from Malpek. She stood slim, lovely and naked, unashamed, in bronze relief against the coarse background. Her great, luminous brown eyes looked at Evest without a trace of fear, unblinking.

"She swam in," Malpek grunted.

"From a canoe—" Evest broke off the thought. "She can't stand there like that! It—it's indecent."

He burrowed hastily into his seabag, brought out coffee-stained shorts and a khaki shirt. He threw them to the girl.

"Put them on," he commanded gruffly.

"Shall I—" Malpek began.

"You shall not!" Evest hurled at him. "Stay here with me."

The girl looked curiously at the garments lying at her feet, but made no move to pick them up.

"She doesn't understand," Malpek said.

Evest tried to keep his eyes off her. He made signs until a slow smile of understanding parted her red lips in a breathless expression. She draped the shirt around soft, brown shoulders, crossed over and sat down on Evest's bunk.

"She's beautiful, isn't she, Malpek?" Evest flushed. Malpek grinned faintly.

"You can imagine what the boys thought when they saw her coming up out of the surf. Lucky for her the moonlight is bright

tonight. They've got itchy trigger fingers on the beach patrol."

"You gave them the word, Malpek?"

Malpek's grin broadened. "I told 'em to look out for a couple more like her."

Evest looked back at the girl, trying vainly to guess her race or nationality. She sat humming, combing slim fingers through long, black hair that still glistened with the wetness of the sea. Her skin was glowing bronze, soft and responsive to the underneath movement of supple muscles. She seemed like a child, sitting there draped in Evest's worn shirt.

He dropped his gaze from the blossoming fullness of her red-lipped mouth to the pulsing hollow of her bare, brown throat.

"Look," he said, "you speakee English?"

She did not look up. He stuttered through a phrase of French, followed by a few words of Island dialect. She remained unresponsive.

"You sleep now," he said, frustrated, and took Malpek's arm. "We'll keep her here tonight," he said, "and see what can be done about her in the morning. Post a guard at the door. I'll turn in at the messhall."

The dawn was like soundless cannonading in the eastern sky. The calling of seabirds and the answering raucous cries of jungle denizens greeted the day. The first gray light crept in under the canvas top covered with palm fronds. There were no walls.

Evest gave orders to a sleepy messman to take food to the girl in the dugout, and sat down to his own portion of strong, black coffee and soggy pancakes. The messman came back hurriedly.

"There's nobody in the dugout, sir." He put down the plate of hotcakes he had carried over and back.

"Damn! Where is the guard?" Evest got to his feet.

The guard came hurrying up. "He's right, sir. I just reported to the gunny. He told me to report to you."

"When did you take over the post?"

"Two o'clock, sir."

"Was she—was anybody in the dugout then?"

"I don't know, sir. The guard reported all secure. I took it for granted—"

"In the Marine Corps, you take nothing for granted!" Evest ground out savagely. He checked his temper. "Get me Gunnery Sergeant Malpek."

The two men looked over the ground outside the dugout door. The sandy soil was tracked by the guard's field shoes, but little else. Sharp examination revealed a few blurred prints of girlish feet, bare, but all pointing toward the dugout. None came away from it.

Malpek scratched his head and opined she had burrowed out through the deck and filled the hole in after her.

"Don't," said Evest, "be an ass."

IN THE first hush of nightfall, Lieutenant Evest walked along the line where jungle met the beach, face set in bitter, brooding lines. Thought of the strange girl had drifted into the crevices of his mind, and he contemplated the hopelessness of their position with a kind of savage despair. When would reinforcements come? It was hopeless to try to hold this shattered base, forgotten by all but the enemy. But there was nothing for it, except to stand and fight according to the established creed of the Corps. He wondered, was it worth it?

He strained his gaze seaward in search of shadowed ships and saw nothing but black water, gold tracked in the dim effulgence of the rising moon. In time his attitude relaxed. A strange light played in his eyes, and it was evident his gaze was focused nearer than the horizon, upon the tossing fringe of honey-colored surf. But no supple shadow rose out of the sea, only

the shadow that taunted him in imagination.

He turned and strolled thoughtfully back toward camp.

The sound came from the jungle at his right. He whirled, arrowed his glance into the black, rancid shadows of the undergrowth. Vines rustled. Evest froze, groping for the automatic that swung at his hip. It was almost ridiculous to imagine that the enemy . . . but still—

"Who's there?" he called hoarsely. He threw himself flat, pistol butt hard against the sweaty palm of his hand.

Soft laughter rippled on the night. The girl parted the vines and stepped into the moonlight, and Blaine Evest's breath stopped in his throat with the beauty of her. She stood silently laughing, and the moon made gold of her naked body. The light softened her mature curves, splashed on the shimmering blackness of her hair and sparkled in the depths of her luminous eyes. Evest felt all the madness of loneliness burning inside of him. The laughing loveliness of her kindled a savage spark in his being. He lurched erect and stumbled forward.

As elusive as the moonlight on the dimpled sea, she avoided his embrace. He caught the delicate scent of her in his nostrils, eddying in the draft she left behind. His arms grasped nothingness. From the bush came the sound of her mocking laughter, then that, too, faded.

Evest paused, frustrated and resentful. Who was this girl who taunted him so? The puzzle of her presence and strange manner oppressed him and made him half angry with her. He returned to the camp possessed with an air of bitter brooding.

The Tojo Express failed its schedule that night. Evest drummed slender fingers on the top of his packing-crate desk. Why? Was there some connection between the bronze girl's presence on the island and the lacking raid? He discarded that hypothesis and regarded the truth with a calm, cold eye. The cessation of hostile activity augured only an attack in force—but when?

All day the men toiled with shovel and sandbags, reinforcing the gun emplacements and defensive fortifications. Stripped to the waist, Evest toiled with them, muscles straining smoothly beneath suntanned skin.

Malpek patted the sand-bagged wall of their position.

"Strong," he murmured. "Strong enough to hold off the devil himself!"

Lieutenant Evest straightened slowly. His mouth was grim.

"For how long?"

Malpek shrugged, grunted, and spat on his hands. The work continued in silence.

NOT the blazing sun nor the gruelling labor could drive from Evest's mind, as he had hoped it might, the mocking sound of the native girl's laughter. He persisted in thinking of her as a native girl, yet he knew that she was not of the race of people that inhabited these islands. There was the regularity of a civilized people in her features. Her grace and manner were beyond comparison with the uncouth actions of the aborigines. The sheer, physical perfection of her stimulated his memory, and his blood ran hot with the thought of her.

A combination of hope and desire led Evest again along the shore line, where the previous night's wandering had brought a meeting with the bronze girl. Exhaustion tingled in nerves and muscles, yet his mind was awake with a fervid eagerness. In spite of his weariness, there was a curious lightness to his step, an avid fire in the searching glance of his keen, gray eyes.

The rising moon had a slightly flattened edge, and the stars made a glorious symphony of patterned light across the blue-black sky. The moontrack upon the sea was a causeway of gold, taking off into the

mysterious immensities of space beyond the tossing horizon. The eldritch illumination hinted at weird, spine-chilling things that might lurk in the shadows, the unknown things that stalk the world by night. A voiceless gibbering sounded in the restless jungle foliage. The night was alive with ancient menaces, with fears and mindly turmoils that haunt the bravest brain.

On the spot they had met yestereve, Evest halted and peered into the shadows. The murmuring night held no sound of her laughter, the creaking of fronds and vines was occasioned by the breeze only. He stole into the shadow of a palm, sat and rested his back against the fibrous bole. This time, he planned, he should surprise her with his presence.

Evest awoke suddenly, guiltily conscious that he had been sleeping. The moon had climbed two hours higher, and the shadow that had concealed him was gone. He lay blinking in the naked moonlight, scanning the beach where nothing moved. A cool hand touched his forehead, and he sat up quickly.

She sat tailor-fashion nearby where his head had been. White teeth sparkled with her smile, and her eyes were luminous and tender. He spent one ravishing glance on the exquisite curves of her body. Their eyes met, and he yielded to the tantalizing promise of her red-lipped mouth. That kiss was sweet with the ultramundane sweetness of ecstatic pain, throbbing pain where tiny teeth had pierced his lip. The salt taste of blood was upon his tongue, and a rivulet of red stained his chin.

"Blaine—Blaine, my lover. . . ."

Magic syllables she whispered, limpid and foreign, yet understandable to him. Where before had he heard this strange tongue? What forgotten recollections did it stir deep in the race-memory of the subconscious? He paid no heed to the perplexing questions engendered. He existed in a sphere of untroubled comfort, where the tangled skein of the jungle retreated in their moment of bliss. Then he was walking hand in hand with her toward the foaming edge of the sea. Somewhere he had left his clothes and he walked as naked as she, nor did the knowledge of his nakedness embarrass him. He moved in a veil of confusion, not understanding what he did, nor remembering his actions. The surf swirled around their bodies and swallowed them.

The moon was low in the west, and the stars had paled with the first flush of dawn when he came up alone from the sea. Movement in the non-supporting air was difficult, and he reeled as he walked toward the jungle.

A sharp challenge lashed out of the dark, and he halted mechanically. The beach patrol was on the alert. Evest identified himself haltingly.

"Just swimming," he explained. "Couldn't sleep."

The muzzle of the sub-machine-gun lowered and he walked on past the helmeted guard. He found his stacked clothing without difficulty, dressed, and went back to the dugout, to the cold, ugly reality of existence on Sanan.

But there was one difference. Loama—such he had learned her name was. Loama's intoxicating loveliness confused his troubled mind by day. By night he met with her in the shadows where palm-fronds veiled the moon. And afterward they plunged together into the sea—into misty nothingness, for beyond that plunge his memory refused to record details.

NIGHT after night they met, she passionate and yearning, he gripped by some power beyond his ability to understand or effort to resist. The moon waned to a shard of gold late in rising, and Loama came to him when it made its appearance in the glittering sky. This was a part of the puzzle, too. What sinister connection

had the rising of the moon with their earthly ecstasy?

She came to him hurriedly and fretted at his caresses.

"The day," she breathed. "Day comes—look, already the sky is pale. Let us go at once, my love. . . ."

He went with her reluctantly, halted stubbornly at the edge of the water. He felt a magnetic urge to continue into the swelling sea, but he fought it off.

"Loama—where are we going? What are you afraid of in the daylight? There are so many things I must know, Loama. I won't go until I do know. . . ."

Strong, brown fingers clutched his arm impatiently.

"Very well," she said. "You have been under a spell of confusion, but now it is lifted. You shall see and know and remember. Oh, lover, we must hurry! Already there is red in the sky!"

He yielded to her urgent entreaty, and they flung themselves together into the surf. Indeed, Evest felt a new clearness of mind as a comber dissolved against his chest and crashed upon the sand. He ducked under with her, thrust forward with mighty swimming strokes. Strength and power swelled his muscles. The water parted around him with a speed and lack of resistance that made him marvel. Loama was a flashing dark shape at his side, swimming down and down into the green depths. Water was as easy to breathe as air. It was magic at work, and he knew that somehow Loama was responsible for it. He looked full into her bronze face and was reassured by the shadow of her red-lipped smile.

He slipped his glance aside and started involuntarily. He veered away and regarded her again. The gray light of dawn struggled down through the water, bathed her bronze body in its pallid glow. Her long black hair flowed in an inky cloud behind her, her body twisted as she swam with the supple ease of a fish, or . . . The thought momentarily horrified him. He glanced again sidewise. From the corner of his eye he beheld the abrupt change that transformed her from a bronze goddess of the sea to a lean, gray shape, sharp-snouted that surged grimly down through the translucent depths.

He knew now, as he had known before, and the spell of confusion had paralyzed his memory from revealing, what she was—good God, what *he* was! His mind flung back to the first ecstatic night at the edge of the jungle, when the poisonous bite of this strange were-creature had made him like unto herself. The legends told the story. Through some alchemy of Nature, Loama was shark by day, and human by night, when the land was bathed in moonglow. How, he did not know. Fast returning came memory of the things she had told him on previous journeys beneath the sea.

It was the trace of human remaining in him that caused him to see Loama in her were-shape from the tail of his eye. The were-vision with which he was now gifted showed him her true shape.

What cursed awakening was this? Evest had always cherished a certain amount of doubt about many things. Was he to believe at last that devils roamed the night and shackled mankind to their dire bidding? Was Loama, then, the tool of some dark, unconsecrated power that had snared him into its toils? He was revolted at the thought; yet beneath ran a current of doubt. Knowledge pounded at the gates of memory while he searched in vain for the key.

Down, down, through the blue-green waters they swept. They must nearly have circled the island, Evest guessed. They skimmed above a bottom of white sand, and weird, phantasmagoric coral shapes reared about them. They picked their way through clefts and valleys, over miniature submerged mountain chains, through jun-

gles of rankly growing seaweeds and came at last upon the mouth of a grotto, concealed in wavering green fronds.

Loama pressed his side in sign to enter.

"In here," she said, "dwell the were-folk of the sea."

Living polyps covered the walls of the grotto, luminous in their own right, so that the water in the cave vibrated with faint illumination. They followed a twisting passageway deep into the bowels of the island, and came out finally into a subterranean cavern of such immensity that not even the super-acute were-vision could penetrate to its farther end. Standing, walking, swimming, a horde of were-people seethed in the cavern, and when Evest glanced at them from the corner of his eye, he saw gray, torpedo-like shark forms in like number.

DARK night pressed down upon the surface world. Skimming the choppy sea overhead, almost hidden in a pall of black smoke pouring from rakish stacks, a swarm of fleet ships steamed slowly toward Sanan. Had Evest, through some inner sight, obtained a glimpse of those dark, steel shapes hugging the water, he should have been recalled to a sterner duty which he had forgotten in his present state of bliss and doubtful agony. But throbbing screws churned by overhead, and Evest was not aware of them.

As they moved about among the were-folk of the cavern, and finally come to rest in a secluded grotto that was their own, Evest had plied Noama with questions concerning these things, and the bits she told him added to others nearly forgotten, and at last the picture was made plain to him.

Once they were of the race of man, Loama told him, and they had lived on a great island in the midst of the sea. Those first men were their ancestors, many, many generations removed. They had spread a mighty culture over the face of the world. All mankind lived in peace and plenty, and commerce crossed the seas and lands and sped through the air. Now, their history was forgotten. That elder race existed simply as a memory with the were-sharks of the sea.

What had become of them, Evest had wanted to know? The Catastrophe, Loama told him, was responsible.

Scientists of that ancient and mighty island had long known of the vast caverns that underlay their abode. They had realized with grim foreboding that some day rock-ribbed walls would no longer be able to sustain the tremendous pressure of flaming gases seeping in from the bowels of the earth. Their efforts to circumvent the Catastrophe had proven fruitless, and the day had come sooner than expected.

The race-memory was dim among Loama's people, and she called it a kind of witchcraft employed by the scientists of old to save the population. A certain few had been changed into dwellers of the sea. Evest understood that in some manner science had conquered witchcraft, but his mind groped vaguely at the details. Mostly an experiment, the results had proven gratifying to those experimented upon.

Loama told of the great Catastrophe in simple words. "The newly-invented were-people were distant from the island the day it occurred. They felt the shocks of earthquake, and in terror swam down to the bottom of the sea. From one moon's waning until the next, giant waves destroyed everything that lived and grew."

She told of the expeditions that had set out. Those that returned brought the horrifying news that the were-folk were all that remained of man. The enraged seas had swept over the low, mountainless lands, turning them into bare mudflats. Of man and his work not one vestige remained.

"They were a mighty folk in that day," she said, "and they had in their hands

knowledge we of the undersea people do not dream of. Long ago, in the early days of my people's existence, we lost the secret of fire. What need had we of fire where flame will not burn?

"We remain beneath the sea because we must. There are certain laws of existence we dare not defy. We must not go upon land in the day, nor during the dark of the moon. These are tribal laws founded upon the greater natural law which no one understands now. To offend them is punishable by death at the hands of the were-people. We can, and frequently, do bring surface people to live with us. That process cannot be reversed. You, Evest, are now doomed with the were-folk to spend the rest of your life under the sea."

LOAMA'S story had blasted his fears of superstition. His mind darted to the ancient legends of Atlantis and Mu. He told her that some members of the human race must have been saved from the Catastrophe. Witness the present race of man that overran the earth. He expressed the hope that somewhere in the ruins of that elder civilization, perhaps below the sea, lay buried the vital formula compounded by the wizards of eld, that would some day be found and release the were-folk from their bonds.

Now, as he rested quietly with her in the pellucid waters of the great cavern, he realized that the were-folk still knew and practiced a certain amount of the "sorcery" bequeathed them by the wizards of eld. For instance, there was the "spell of confusion" Loama had cast upon his senses. Mysterious ways of coming and going that she seemed reluctant to discuss with him. He had not yet managed to solve the secret of her disappearance from the sandbagged dugout.

After nightfall the were-folk came out of their cavern and pursued the primal business of hunting and eating upon the sea-bottom. They pursued colorful fishes and ate them raw, and Evest found, strangely enough, that he had developed a new appetite that relished the fishes.

He had discovered a cleft in the coral that was particularly abundant in edible morsels when Loama told him of the ships. The information had been given her by one of the tribes-people. Evest felt an electric thrill course through him.

"What were they like?" he asked excitedly. "Whose ships are they?"

Loama shrugged. "My people know nothing of surface ships. Is there a difference, then, what kind of ships they are?"

There was, indeed, and he tried to explain to her, but the discussion involved too many technicalities. When he told her of the importance of knowing whether the ships were friend or enemy, he found her indifferent to the concept of war. Such was beyond her understanding.

"Danger," he said irritably. "Do you understand danger? They may be men who want to destroy my friends on the island."

Her expressionless beauty was maddening. She did not understand.

"Is it not more important, my lover, that you are safe from them?"

"It's my duty," he cried. "I am their leader. I must protect them. Don't you see. . . ."

He gave up, realizing the hopelessness of explaining. Brought home to him, too, was the fact that he had failed in his duty. He could not say that he had not walked into his present situation with eyes wide open.

He knew now what he was, and the thought sickened him. He was a deserter —in the same category with the worst brig rat he had ever known. The agony of his realization was unbearable. His crime was punishable by death. He had deserted his post in time of war. Face the music. That was it. The idea drummed in his brain. He had to go back and face the music. What good were honor and duty under the sea? No matter, he had to face the music. He

had deserted his men at the time of their greatest need.

"I have to go back," he burst out. "I have done a great wrong coming here."

"You can't go back," Loama said tonelessly.

"I will go back!" he countered fiercely.

"Not in the dark of the moon."

"I shall go back and wait for the light of the moon. These ships—I must warn my friends of them."

"You cannot assume human form except in the light of the moon. By then it will be too late."

"I can do something. At least, I can see for myself whether something can be done."

"Very well, my love. I shall go with you."

He was glad she would come. He was miserable and frightened at what he had done, at the inescapability of his doom. They sped up through the dark water together.

GUNNERY SERGEANT MALPEK was carrying on in the absence of his lieutenant. He came out of the dugout to inspect the beach defenses. He stopped to smoke a cigarette with the crew of a seacoast gun. The cold light of dawn fingered at the eastern sky.

"Any word yet of the C.O.?"

Malpek cast a look askance at the rangy gun captain and ground out his cigarette butt.

"Not a sign. It's bad dope."

Malpek was concealing the fact that he had found Evest's clothes on the beach. He concealed too what only his own eyes had observed—the naked pair of footprints leading down the beach and into the sea.

Malpek finished his round of inspection before sunrise and returned to the dugout. He was not an imaginative man. He could not speculate on the meaning of those footprints. Before he rubbed them out, he had noted well that it was a man and a woman who had walked into the sea. He had looked in vain for some sign of a boat, but there was none. He could have but one opinion—Evest had tired of his responsibility and had left the island with the woman. But how and where? He continued his interrupted search through Evest's meager possessions.

Perhaps the lieutenant was dead. Perhaps he had gone swimming and had got caught by some treacherous current. This thought was more comforting than that his commander had deserted them. He had suspected from the lieutenant's actions that he had been meeting the girl at night. He was certain now that Evest had helped her to escape from the dugout. He was a smooth one, all right, pretending ignorance!

Malpek leafed through some papers, came upon a studio portrait of a rather pretty, blonde girl. It was inscribed, "Love, to Blaine—Gloria." He took up a paper he had sorted out beforehand. It was the letter Evest had tried to write. The paper was blank except for the salutation, "Gloria dearest." Malpek sighed and laid them aside together. The rest of the material was letters, orders—the usual run of correspondence that comes to a commander's office in the field. None were newer than two months old. Lieutenant Evest had left nothing in writing to indicate his whereabouts or his intentions.

Malpek sat hunched over the desk for a long time, staring through the sooty chimney at the flickering flame in the lantern. Finally he drew a clean sheet of paper toward him, picked up Evest's own pen and wrote: "Lieutenant Blaine Evest—missing in action."

He weighted the paper carefully with the pen and went out of the dugout. He squinted toward the far horizon, blue now with morning's early light. A smudge of smoke dirtied the blue. He shouted a command and the camp became an anthill of

orderly haste. Thudding concussions popped faintly across the water, and high above, the smoke puffs of anti-aircraft fire blossomed. The unseen vessels were being attacked by equally unseen aircraft. But which was friend and which enemy? Malpek gave orders to the gunners to hold their fire.

EVEST approached the scene of action filled with bitter recrimination. His failure to his duty oppressed him. He realized intensely now the true values of the ideals which he had been sent to this part of the world to protect. Had he been able to return, even if it had meant the maximum punishment, he would have cheerfully done so, in order to find peace with his conscience.

Loama swam close beside him, large eyes examining him with concern. Somehow, she sensed that struggle that went on in his mind, and she knew now that he was not hers—he could never be hers. He was a warrior, and he was returning to the flame for which he had been tempered.

Two triangular fins cut the water around the battling ships, unobserved by the little brown men who fixed anxious eyes on the sky. Evest ascertained that they were indeed enemy vessels, trying to fight off what seemed to be an attack in force from the skies. The water was alive with sound—the mad churning of screws, the concussions of bombs, the booming of anti-aircraft and the crackling of machine-gun fire. The whole enemy task force was in disorder, wheeling and circling madly to escape the vengeance of the slashing war birds above.

The attacking planes were a definite sign to Evest that the American fleet was close, bringing succor to the Marines on Sanan. The knowledge cheered him. He turned and swam in the direction he thought it might lie.

Somewhere on the way he separated from Loama, but then the friendly vessels were in sight, and he lost all thought of her. A flight of planes came in to nest on the broad deck of a carrier that accompanied some smaller, slow-moving transports. Destroyers cut the water near the main group, and the warbirds darted out to do battle with the enemy beyond the horizon. Sight of them was like a tonic in Evest's veins, and he cruised among the ships with a feeling of belonging.

Loama came up suddenly from below and pressed against his side.

"They mean so much to you, don't they?" she said. "Tell me about them."

Her presence brought realization of his plight, and he was silent for a moment of hopeless despair.

"The big one," he said at last, "carries airplanes. They fly."

"They are fighting the ships over yonder?"

"Yes. The smaller ships circling about are destroyers."

"Destroyers? What do they destroy?"

"Submarines mostly. Submarines travel under water."

"Like the one following us?"

Evest became quickly alert. "Is there a submarine following us?"

"There is a ship which travels under the water. I swam around it once. It is not so big as these others."

"Are you sure?" he asked suspiciously.

"Oh, yes. It had a kind of house in the middle. The house has a big red spot on it. Is that some kind of sign?"

Evest threshed to a halt. If this were true. . . . He knew it was true by the manner in which she answered his questions. How else could she describe a Jap submarine, unless she had seen one?

"I must destroy that submarine," he told her grimly. "If I do not, they will destroy my friends on the ships."

Alarm suffused Loama's rounded features.

"No, no, Blaine. It—It looked wicked. Let the destroyers destroy it."

"They would in a minute," he said, "if they knew it was near. But they don't, and it will destroy my friends, and perhaps slip away unharmed. Show me this submarine."

Strange as Evest's emotion was to her, she seemed to understand. Somehow, this man's friends meant more to him than she did—or his own life and safety. She acquiesced in silence.

Evest gained evidence that the enemy force was in flight by the fact that the convoy had straightened out and was steaming on toward Sanan. Fortunately for the crew of the lurking submarine, the convoy was a slow-moving one. The undersea raider skulked along, biding its time. Snaking through the blue-green sea, two grim, gray shapes bore alongside, she remaining due to a queer sense of loyalty which he had somehow imparted to her, he vainly searching for some means of interrupting the submarine's progress.

The bloated hull commenced to rise past them, and they followed it up. The beat of the screw idled and stopped. The submarine poked its periscope above the surface.

Inside, a wizened yellow commander scanned the surface, barked stuttering syllables that were echoed and re-echoed the length of the vessel. Something thumped inside the iron hull, and a moment later the submarine rocked as it vomited an eighteen-foot torpedo in a cloud of compressed air.

Hate, rage and helplessness welled up in Evest in a blinding, agonized cloud. He flung himself against the steel conning tower, struck with a bruising jar and bounced away. The enemy began to submerge.

ON THE surface, the huge carrier turned aside, and the bubbling wake of the torpedo passed ahead, a complete miss. Instantly the entire convoy snapped to alertness. Destroyers belched black smoke and swept down upon the point of origin. Far below, Evest felt the numbing concussion of a depth bomb that exploded a quarter of a mile away.

The submarine turned its nose aside and down, diving for safety. Close to the bottom, it would level off, and slip quietly away while the destroyers fruitlessly zigzagged above. Evest had only a split-instant to decide what to do. He jammed the diving fins with his body.

The steel fins began to level off, bit deep into his flesh. Hot streams of agony laced through him. In another moment the nose struck bottom, drove down hard. The Jap commander lost his head. Engines spun full speed astern. The violent beat of propellers was picked up by the listening "ears" of a destroyer.

Evest had known what he was doing. It was the kind of decision a Marine always makes. With the end only seconds away, Loama clung to him.

"Go," he panted. "Go."

From this man she had learned too well the lesson of loyalty. She still struggled to loosen him as a dark, can-like object sank down upon them. A destroyer's screws roared overhead and dwindled.

A foaming geyser shot up astern of the destroyer, splashed back into the sea. Black upon the tossing water, oil came up and made a slick, shiny patch. The destroyer spun about and came back. A seaman ejaculated suddenly and leaned over the rail. Another followed his gaze with curious glance.

"What's up, Mac?"

"Funny thing," grunted the sailor. "I thought I saw a couple of naked bodies, a woman and a white man. Just a couple of dead sharks, though, that got blasted by the same can that got the Japs. Ain't it funny how you sometimes think you see somethin', and it's really somethin' else?"

SUPERSTITIONS

WHEN AN OLD WARRIOR OF SUMATRA FEELS THAT HE CANNOT LIVE MUCH LONGER BECAUSE OF FAILING STRENGTH, HE CLIMBS INTO A TREE WHILE HIS RELATIVES CHANT AND PERFORM A NATIVE DANCE. THE INTENDED SUICIDE STAYS PERCHED ON A LIMB UNTIL FINALLY EXHAUSTED, HE FALLS TO THE GROUND WHERE HE IS *BEATEN ON THE HEAD UNTIL DEAD!* HIS BODY IS THEN DIVIDED INTO MANY PARTS AND HE IS PROMPTLY **EATEN.** IT IS THE BELIEF OF THE NATIVES THAT BY DEVOURING HIM, AN OLD MAN'S WISDOM IS *PASSED ON TO THE* ***YOUNGER GENERATION***

AND TABOOS by Weill

TO FOIL THE DEVIL WHO MIGHT FOLLOW AND TEMPT THEM, WOMEN IN SOME DISTRICTS OF THE NORTHERN SAHARA WEAR LONG TRAILING CAPES THAT DRAG ALONG THE SAND *AND WIPE OUT THEIR* ***FOOTSTEPS!***

THE BELIEF THAT BREAKING A MIRROR BRINGS SEVEN YEARS BAD LUCK ORIGINATED WITH THE ROMANS ABOUT THE 1ST CENTURY OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA. THEY BELIEVED THAT THE HEALTH OF A PERSON CHANGED *EVERY SEVEN YEARS,* AND SINCE THE MIRROR REFLECTED THE APPEARANCE OR HEALTH OF A PERSON— TO BREAK IT MEANT *TO BREAK THE* ***HEALTH*** *FOR A PERIOD OF* ***SEVEN YEARS!***

Night Must Not Come

By
ALLISON V. HARDING

Heading by BORIS DOLGOV

Ever since the birth of time fires have been kept at night and man has never allowed complete darkness, for evil things are waiting out there beyond the light.

HEAD defense warden Charles Higgins of Sector 6 looked up as two of his subordinates came into the OCD office.

One of them, a middle-aged woman, white helmet covering gray hair, plumped down into a chair near Higgins' desk. Her companion, a short, swarthy man stood leaning against the wall.

"How long to go, Chief?" The woman spoke.

Higgins glanced at a card on his desk. "We'll get the sirens at 8:15."

The three lapsed into silence. In a few minutes, other wardens entered the office. Higgins spoke to some, nodded to others. He had reason to be proud of his district and his wardens. They were well organized for tonight's job. In less than a quarter of an hour New Dixon, large Eastern metropolis would have its first city-wide blackout. For the first time all the millions of diversified lights would go out. All activity would cease, there would be complete darkness.

Higgins looked around the room appraisingly. His two deputies—the housewife, Mrs. Carey, the stocky corner grocer, Mr. Adreco—were, like the others, plain citizens banded together in a common

cause. He was proud of them all, he thought, as he silently went through the roll call. All were present but his first deputy, Professor James Everett of New Dixon College.

The head defense warden frowned a bit to himself. Everett had been worrying him lately. To be sure, the professor had been one of the first to join up and had always proven himself an enthusiastic volunteer. But recently he had skipped a few meetings. And only yesterday when Higgins had mentioned the blackout scheduled for tonight Everett had seemed very perturbed at the news. Oh well, these professors of Sociology were unpredictable. Everett would be all right.

Higgins' train of thought was brought back to the immediate as he heard his name called imperatively from the hall. All eyes were on the door as Professor Everett hurried in. His face was feverish and his small frame beneath his rumpled suit seemed to quiver with excitement as he headed for Higgins. He leaned over the desk for a moment to catch his breath.

"Professor, why haven't you your equipment," Higgins started to remonstrate, noting the other's dress, "Man, you know we've got this drill coming up in a few minutes."

Everett had caught his breath somewhat now. Ignoring the question, he clutched the chief's arm. "Listen, Mr. Higgins, that's what I've got to tell you. The drill . . . we've got to stop it. Do you understand me, we can't have the blackout!" So saying Everett collapsed into a chair.

FOR a moment nobody spoke. Higgins noted that the other wardens in the room showed the same astonishment and bewilderment that he felt. Charles Higgins rose to the occasion. He came around his desk, smiling, and laid his hand on Everett's shoulder.

"I know how it is. We're all keyed up, I'll confess I am. But once we get on the job that'll all disappear. Now you get your equipment, Professor, and we'll go over the assignments once more. I want our district to be 100 per cent. Come on, man, we haven't got much time."

Everett shuddered and then visibly took hold of himself. He straightened in his chair and then spoke, making an effort to keep his voice level.

"Higgins, I've stumbled on something. There isn't time to explain, but we've got to call off tonight's blackout."

"Impossible," the chief snapped. "If you're feeling ill, we'll get along without you. I'll get one of the others to take your post."

"It isn't that, I'm all right. It's just that I know we're making a terrible mistake. We've got to call this thing off until some kind of investigation can be made. There's something . . . something I don't understand."

The other wardens were staring incredulously. Higgins could see they didn't know quite how to take the actions of the usually dignified reserved professor. The sector head was as puzzled himself.

"In heaven's name, Professor, what do you mean? What kind of investigation . . . and of what?"

Everett spoke now with an effort, "An investigation of the forces that I am convinced will be loosed on this city if we put all the lights out tonight!"

Mrs. Carey smiled and spoke accusingly, "Now, Professor, don't tell us you're afraid of the dark?" It was a relief to hear the answering chuckles from the others. Higgins turned again to Everett.

"Now listen, Professor Everett, we are—"

"You've got to hear me," Everett broke in. "Let me finish. Ever since the birth of time, ever since the birth of man, fires were kept at night. Complete darkness was never allowed by any tribe in any age. Areas

where cities grew up are particularly susceptible to these forces. Always a little light was kept somewhere. And as time passed and the cities developed, always through the darkness there would be lights. Of course, it was natural in a city to have light. Don't you see, though, that this was more than a coincidence. For lights and movement are the only protection against forces of darkness. And we're going to defy this. For the first time in the ages since man has lived on this earth, tonight there will suddenly be no lights, no lights at all—no street lights, no midnight pinpricks of illumination on top of skyscrapers—just blackness."

In his business as well as in this volunteer capacity, Higgins was essentially a practical-man of action. His first interest was in calculating the effect this scene was going to have on his wardens and their part in tonight's drill.

He put his arm around Everett's shoulders. "Come on, you'd better go back up to your apartment."

Everett brushed the arm away. He then pulled out of his pocket a red-leather faced book, placed it on the desk.

"See this?" he opened the ancient book.

HIGGINS bent over to read the almost illegible title, "Kendl's Theories of Tribal Folklore." Everett's hands shook as he thumbed to a section in the middle of the book. Some of the leaves were held together with transparent tape and the entire volume looked about to fall apart.

Everett stabbed his finger at a passage on one yellow page.

Higgins bent lower, straining his eyes to read where the professor indicated.

". . . it must be concluded that areas where early tribal gatherings took place were thought to be evil, particularly after sundown. Many persons were needed in these areas where no man dare lie down alone and sleep unguarded through the night—always some were needed to tend the fires that stood between those gathered in these locations and the strange powers of darkness. It is logical to presume that these forces, inherent in darkness, and responsible for the instinctive fear that humans have always held for the dark, will always be a potential threat to mankind.

"In the future, let no one ignorant of these traditions forget the essential duty—to keep light always somewhere in the darkness.

"For man has a stake in this eternal struggle between light and dark—the stake is his very existence. . . ."

As Higgins read to himself, the slow, rising note of a siren growled out of the night into the little room. Instantly, the wardens went into action. Adreco grabbed the lever to turn off the street lamp in the front. Everett, realizing perhaps that he was too late in his warning message pulled himself together and reached for his helmet. Higgins noted with relief that he seemed determined to go through with his duty.

The chief warden issued last instructions, reached for his own helmet, and followed Everett into the street. Once outside the building, the wardens deployed to their posts.

Higgins noted with satisfaction the way apartment and dwelling lights were snapping out within a few seconds of the first warning. But he noticed that Everett, whose post was down at the corner, seemed reluctant to move away from the street light. The professor was scared. That was obvious.

In a few minutes, the surrounding buildings were completely dark. Higgins frowned down at the dial of his watch. In a few more minutes the second note of the siren should sound the red warning. This would mean all lights out, traffic would stop, and pedestrians would have to seek shelter.

Everett was still near him.

"Come on, Professor, get down to the corner," he ordered.

Everett hung back. "Listen, Higgins, just one thing. Let's leave this light on here in the street."

"You're crazy! I know my instructions. Now get down to your post and see this thing through. You're setting a helluva example, Everett. I thought you'd be a man to fulfill your responsibilities to the fullest. Instead of that, I find you've cooked up some cock and bull story about what will happen if we turn all the lights out."

Without a further word Everett turned and trudged off down the street. Higgins pulled at his chin reflectively. It was puzzling. A man like Professor Everett! His thoughts were pulled back to the job at hand by the sudden, rising crescendo of the sirens again.

IMMEDIATELY Adreco moved to the street light and put it out. Another warden, Ed Harley, down on the avenue, motioned some pedestrians into a shelter with a brief flash of his torch.

Gradually the noise of the huge city slackened and stopped. One by one the last remaining lights winked out. The darkness of the first warning period now became an impenetrable blackness.

Higgins himself felt a sudden feeling of depression. Here he was in the heart of a city of millions—and yet he might as well be alone on a desert isle. Or the millions around him might as well have died!

He shook himself of this mood. By God, he was letting that crazy professor affect him. He must make the rounds of his post now. Higgins realized with a sudden feeling of surprise that his other wardens had seemingly dissolved into the blackness. Even Adreco, nearest him, was invisible. Higgins started cautiously along the street. He almost ran into the lamppost.

"Joe," he called. "Joe Adreco, where are you?"

There wasn't a sound. Adreco was probably back near the building wall. Higgins moved on. Three dwellings down—he knew each post by heart—was Mrs. Carey. She should be in front of the apartment there. Higgins groped his way, not wanting to use his light. Suddenly after several more steps he realized that he must have walked by the house where she should have been. . . . Higgins began to walk more rapidly. The sound of his footsteps echoed dully from side to side of the street. At last he nearly tripped over the corner in the dark. Everett's post. Where was Everett? Higgins groped his way for a few yards either way and found nobody. An eerie thought came to him. His wardens had disappeared . . . in fact everybody had disappeared, he was alone!

For a moment he tried to grasp the situation and then cold sweat began to mat his forehead. . . . How could this be? Ed Harley, the wise-cracking member of his corps, surely he was at his post. . . . Higgins stumbled on a bit further and felt for the railing that ran around an old brownstone house off the corner. He knew every inch of this neighborhood, yet in the blackness it seemed strangely alien. His feet dragged over the uneven concrete pavement as he stumbled forward. He would allow himself one brief snap of his flashlight. After all, he could chance that.

HE TURNED his light toward where the row of brownstone buildings should be and snapped the switch shortly. The triggered beam of light darted out for a few short feet and then was diffused and lost in layers and layers of blackness. He couldn't see any row of houses. He couldn't see anything.

Higgins was a logical man, though. Of course, a fog must have come up, Ed, well, Ed must be here somewhere in this murk.

"Ed!" Higgins kept his voice down. "Ed, where are you?"

The sound of his own voice beat back at him as though the wet, oppressive curtain of night were a sounding board.

"I'll be damned," Higgins spoke to himself and straightened his shoulders. He was not the kind of man to be panicked by things that temporarily, at least, were . . . well, peculiar. But he wondered at the coldness that he felt in his arms and legs and the dampness of his forehead and hands.

After all, where were his wardens? In sector tests before this, they had always stuck to their posts. It was incredible that all of them should be off post at the same time. It was impossible. His mind flashed back to Professor Everett and his warning before the test. What had the old fool meant with his ancient book of folklore?

All this time Higgins had been stumbling forward and suddenly his outstretched hand came in contact with the rail he had been seeking. He gripped its dripping wet roundness and hung on. He realized why he hadn't been able to see anything . . . this was a heavy, dripping fog . . . thick, like, well, almost like some strange gas.

Higgins tried to shrug away the depression that oozed over him with the same stealth as the fog. He must get along back to post. With carefully rationed pricks of light from his torch he found his way up the street. And again he met no one where three, four of his wardens should have been. He finally gained the entrance to sector headquarters and stumbled in the doorway and down the hall to the blacked-out door of their office. He went in, closing the door behind him. He was irritated at the way his hand shook as he reached out to turn on the small desk light.

As the light flicked on, Higgins felt a new surge of confidence. Even so, he staggered as he headed over toward the basin in the corner. He stared at himself incredulously in the mirror over the basin. His face was a dead white, his eyes dilated. God Lord, what had happened to him out there in the darkness?

JOE ADRECO turned the street light off in the same precise way he handled the scales in his grocery store. He had practiced this many times before and there was nothing to it. As he completed this job he moved back from the lamppost somewhat and into the area assigned to him in front of a row of tenements. He marveled at the sudden slowing down of the tempo of the city . . . and finally the utter silence. He looked up the street to his left where head warden Charles Higgins should be. Adreco was amazed at the impenetrable blackness. Of course, there was no moon tonight and it was a bit cloudy, but this fog that seemed to begin to swirl around him was a new wrinkle. It hadn't seemed thick a few minutes ago. Adreco shrugged and kept his sharp eyes peeled for any movement or light.

The silence and blackness were oppressive. Once he called out, "Mr. Higgins! Chief, are you there?" There wasn't any answering sound. It was as though Adreco was completely alone, on guard in a cemetery. . . . It was funny, there was something kinda scary about all this, thought Adreco, and the old professor was to blame, shooting his head off before the drill the way he had.

All of a sudden Adreco got a funny feeling, it was as though somebody had him by the throat, it was hard to breathe—Adreco shook himself angrily. What was this? He wasn't getting scared?

Still, this fog was fierce—like breathing water. Adreco moved down the street, to the next post where Mrs. Carey was supposed to be. Their posts bordered. Mrs. Carey would have something bright to say, she of warm face and motherly nature.

Adreco beamed his torch ahead and through the swirling mist, picked out the spot where Mrs. Carey was posted . . . he gaped. Mrs. Carey off her post! That was unthinkable. But she wasn't to be seen.

Adreco called, "Mrs. Carey. Heh!"

His voice sounded little and futile. Adreco felt scared. By God, he *was* alone. Where were those others? Where was the sector chief and Mrs. Carey?

Joe gripped his light and huddled down into his overcoat. The fog moved around him and settled down like a damp cloak. Joe wished he was home, upstairs over his store . . . where there was warmth and brightness again.

MRS. CAREY had the row of buildings at the near-end of the block. With satisfaction, she noted the lights all out inside. Down the street she could barely discern Higgins and Adreco standing near the street light. As the second siren sounded she saw Adreco go to the light and turn it off. And then she could see no more. The figures of Adreco and Higgins snapped from view like images on a movie screen suddenly gone blank.

As she waited, Mrs. Carey pulled her collar up to protect her throat from the extreme dampness. Funny, she hadn't noticed the fog earlier in the evening. Pretty soon, Higgins would come by, inspecting the posts. She'd be glad to see anybody, it was so lonely . . . even that crackpot Everett. What had he meant with all that funny talk earlier?

Time passed and still no Higgins. Mrs. Carey wondered if he had missed her as he walked by in the stygian blackness. That seemed impossible, still she thought she'd walk down toward the street lamp to see if Adreco had seen him.

It was then she realized the density of the air and blackness. She inched forward until finally she bumped her shoulder into the street light.

"Joe," she called. "Oh, Joe." That was strange. Adreco off his post, too. Mrs. Carey shrugged and resumed her cautious walk up the street. No Higgins either. Very strange. Only her old aunt believed in disappearing acts; she must have missed Adreco and Higgins in the dark.

She wished this drill was over. And was it her imagination, or was the air getting heavier, pounding down on her head like pressured steam? Mrs. Carey put her fingers to her ears and grimaced. That professor and his stories would have them all believing in bogey tales.

PROFESSOR EVERETT went off down the street with Higgins' last words stinging him. Yet he had tried to do his best. He had tried to warn them. He gripped more tightly at the old leather-faced book he was holding: "Kendl's Theories of Tribal Folklore." It was a fascinating work based on the entire history of tribal customs in this country. Indians, Dutch, French, English. Fascinating, that is, until Everett had stumbled on those fateful paragraphs tucked away in the middle of the volume and had done some thinking. But how could he make the others believe him? As he reached his post at the corner, he turned and looked back down the street. He could see a shadow in the darkness that must be Mrs. Carey. Beyond, he could see the faint light in the distance; the two figures beneath were Higgins and Adreco. Then Everett heard the second siren signal and the faraway dot of light from the street lamp flicked out.

Despite himself, Everett began to shake in the thick, chill air. From nowhere a fog seemed to build up around him. Good Lord, it was black. He beamed his light briefly at the ground. The concrete walk beneath him looked yellow and evil. He wondered when this damn thing would be over. And Higgins, Higgins should be coming by soon, shouldn't he?

Everett inched back to the front of the corner building. He placed his back against the round iron railing that ran its width. The fog was getting worse. The air was so laden with a reeking humidity that it was hard to breathe. Everett felt an indescribable loneliness. It was hopeless to fight any longer; he froze where he stood, his fingers stiffening on his torch, straightening, the torch dropping with a faraway thud to the sidewalk. He opened his mouth to cry out but he couldn't. He wheezed with the effort to get air . . . his other hand went rigid, the old book slipped from his fingers, and then the fog swept down over him, covering him up with layers and layers of suffocating black dampness.

ON THE all clear Higgins got up from his desk again. By now he had pulled himself together. He was annoyed at himself and at the results of the whole evening. He went out the door to the front of the building. There was Adreco turning on the street light.

"Where were you, Joe?" Higgins cracked rather irritably.

"Never budged but once, Chief, except to mosey down to Mrs. Carey's post. Guess I missed her in the murk though." For up the street coming toward them was the redoubtable Mrs. Carey.

Higgins sniffed the air. Strange, but the fog seemed to have disappeared as quickly as it had come. Just then two figures rounded the corner. One was Warden Harley. The other was a patrolman.

Harley called something that Higgins couldn't quite catch.

"What," Higgins answered.

Harley came up puffing and blowing.

"It's Everett."

Higgins repeated, "What?"

"He's dead," Harley waved down to the corner. The patrolman nodded, eyes on a notebook in which he was writing.

Higgins half ran down to the corner. The streets were still virtually empty. A first aid helper was standing by Everett. The professor was lying on his back right under the railing.

"He's dead, all right," observed the first aider. Higgins dispatched a messenger for a doctor. In a few minutes a physician from the block showed up. Examination revealed that Everett had apparently died from a heart attack. The blackout test had been too much for him.

It was a sober little group of wardens that trouped into the headquarters of Sector 6.

The news of Everett's death had come to each of them as a shock . . . for despite his eccentricities, the professor had always been an amiable and hard worker in their group.

Suddenly Higgins thought of something. He questioned Harley closely. No, nothing had been found near Everett. Higgins waited until the wardens had left the office and then called Police Headquarters. No, no book had been found among the professor's effects.

The following day Higgins obtained permission to go through Professor Everett's room up at New Dixon College. Everett had been a bachelor and his small room overlooking the quadrangle was spartan in appearance. But nowhere was there a sign of "Kendl's Theories of Tribal Folklore."

On a hunch, Higgins went to the school library. The librarian showed interest im-

Buy War Bonds and Stamps

mediately on mention of Everett's name and, after offering some words of sympathy and admiration for the professor, went to his records.

Yes, Everett had borrowed Kendl's "Theories." And the book had not been returned! Only the fact that Professor Everett had been a staff college member enabled the college to lend out this book as it was a rare relic, and so far as known, there was only one copy in print. The librarian shook his head at the news Higgins offered that no trace of the book had been found.

"But nobody ever read the book except Professor Everett," he consoled himself and Higgins. "None of the students had reason to call for it. And the professor was the only member of the staff to use it. Of course, a rare book like that; it's most unfortunate. What do you suppose could have happened?" The librarian shook his head.

BEING as diligent and painstaking in his volunteer defense work as he was in his own business, Charles Higgins soon caught the eye of those public officials always on the lookout for men of ability who are willing to serve a good cause. Within a fortnight of the city-wide test, Higgins had been named as assistant director of the whole Eastern area.

He brought to his new job a stern efficiency, an uncomfortably clear remembrance of the first complete blackout of a large city and certain definite convictions. It was he, for instance, who initiated a more liberal ruling on lighting in the great cities.

With official approval, he ordained that certain traffic and guide lights were to stay on;, and, mindful of the numerous inexplicable accidents among wardens in the first complete blackout, these volunteers should henceforth be allowed a freer use of their hand torches.

To his new job—and just possibly influencing his decision, although he would have been the last to admit this—Higgins also brought a vivid memory of a page in an old book that had vanished in the darkness; a page warning those in cities ever to keep guardian lights through the night.

NEW SUCCESS OVER ATHLETE'S FOOT

NEW SCIENTIFIC 2-WAY TREATMENT WITH **QUINSANA** POWDER ON FEET AND IN SHOES – IS PRODUCING AMAZING RESULTS. IN TESTS ON THOUSANDS OF PERSONS, PRACTICALLY ALL CASES OF ATHLETE'S FOOT CLEARED UP IN A SHORT TIME.

Even now as the murderous forces of law and lawlessness closed in on her she was happy. For wasn't she going home to her house of dreams?

Louella Goes Home

By SEABURY QUINN

LOUELLA munched the last crumb of her hamburger, drained the final drop of alleged coffee from the chip-rimmed earthenware mug and laid a quarter on the counter. "Is there a hotel where I can put up tonight near here?" she asked the white-aproned proprietor of the roadside stand as she retrieved the two nickels of change he dropped before her and glanced covertly across her shoulder—a gesture which had become second nature to her in the past few hours.

"No'm, not 'less you're figgerin' on drivin' through to Titusville by dusk," the young man answered. "That'd be about fo' hours steady ridin'; bring you in 'bout ten o'clock, I reckon, if you' gas holds out."

"Thank you," she acknowledged with a smile. "Is it a good hotel?"

"Well"—he scratched his left ear reflectively—"that all depends on wot you call a good un. You're from Noo Yawk, ain't you?"

He cast a glance at the yellow and black plate on her car. "I don't reckon it's what a Noo Yawker'd call a good hotel, but it's got clean beds an' a good cook—"

"That's all that anyone could ask, I'm sure," Louella turned the battery of black-fringed hazel eyes full on him. "Thank you so much again; I'll try to get there before ten o'clock. What's the legal speed limit?"

"Fifty miles, most places, but I shouldn't be surprised if you could talk yo'seff out of a ticket if a highway patrolman stops you."

The smile with which she acknowledged the compliment was positively devastating, but as she climbed behind the wheel of the small roadster and shot the self-starter all vestige of it vanished from her face as quickly as a spot of winter sunshine vanishes beneath the shadow of a wind-blown cloud. "You'll be a dam' sight smarter than I think you are if you can talk yourself out of this spot, sister," she told herself as she steered the car out into the highway and pressed down on the accelerator. "Titusville, h'm? I hope they stop to ask him if I came this way and he feels good and gossipy. There ought to be a motor court somewhere along the road where I can hole up for the night while they dash past." She snapped down the door of the glove compartment in the dashboard, took out the little automatic that lay wrapped in a handkerchief and laid it on the seat beside her. The needle on the dial of her speedometer climbed steadily, fifty, fifty-five, sixty. The road lay straight before her, gray as putty, uncurving as a stretch of railway, undulating gently. There were no vehicles in front of her, no other wayfarer showed in the rear-view mirror. She bore down on the treadle steadily and the needle nudged its way to seventy. The little bus was giving everything it had, but there were still two full hours of daylight, and they'd have something that could do ninety. . . .

Heading by A. R. TILBURNE

Why was she here? she wondered as the road reeled out behind her like a paid-out gray ribbon. She didn't know. There was no more reason for her to have fled south than to have struck out northward through Connecticut or north and west through New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Her turning toward the south had been as purely, reasonlessly instinctive as streaking for the nearest tree is natural to a threatened cat. Dear heaven knew there had been no time to plan a getaway, no time for thought or mapping strategy.

LOUELLA McCARTHY—Mademoiselle Rin-tin (pronounced Rat-tat, with the final *t* almost silent) to several thousand customers of burlesque theatres—was in the tightest spot of her twenty-eight years, of a career which seemed to have been composed almost exclusively of tight spots. She had been born in the back room of a top-floor tenement in that section of New York euphemistically known as Hell's Kitchen at almost the precise moment that Patsy the Snitch had breathed his final gasp into the sawdust on the floor of Pearl Derby O'Brien's saloon, his sudden unlamented demise due to lead administered by three young gentlemen in the pay of Owney Maddox. Dion McCarthy, her father, divided his time almost equally between the City Prison on Welfare Island, Mike Thierney's stables in Tenth Avenue and the White Swan Social and Athletic Club. Celeste McCarthy, her mother, was a laundress by profession and as amiable a harridan as ever breathed gin into a shirtfront or screamed half-drunken curses at husband, children, neighbors or the police. She too knew city institutions of correction intimately from the inside, and Louella as the oldest of seven children played hopscotch and skipped rope on the sidewalks of New York, dodged Forty-second Street trolleys and New York Central freight engines, and was the inefficient little mother to a tousle-headed, dirty-nosed collections of junior McCarthys.

She grew up undernourished, spindle-shanked, flat-chested and anaemically pale, with a mop of almost flame-colored hair and wide-set, perfectly enormous hazel eyes "put in with a smutty finger," which is to say their lashes were astonishingly long and black and curling. At six she was an adept little thief, displaying equal skill at pilfering small objects from the five and ten cent stores and snatching luscious and otherwise unattainable fruit from pushcarts or Italian green-groceries' stands. By eight she had progressed to picking pockets.

Of schooling she had almost none. Urged by the truant officers she was fairly regular in attendance, but the sessions in the schoolroom were as wearisome to her as their trips to "the Island" were to her parents, and though she learned to read without effort, both spelling and arithmetic were sciences as abstruse and unmasterable as the mysteries of the cabala or Dionysus.

Books opened up new, unsuspected avenues. She read voraciously as a cormorant eats, and with no more selectivity. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Westward Ho!" "Wedded and Parted," she read one avidly as another. The rich, flamboyant romances of Rider Haggard were crowded into her immature uncritical mind along with Joseph Hergesheimer's sophisticated stories, F. Scott Fitzgerald's tales of flaming youth and the crisply artificial chronicles of Society by Robert W. Chambers.

And so at twelve she knew two worlds: The crime-infested, booze-blighted drab world of her outer consciousness and the ever-varied world of books where blood ran high and love flamed fiery-hot or crisp-lipped, cool-eyed gentlemen and ladies made razor-sharp jests at the expense of virtue or treated the Commandment against infidelity as a worn-out, rather tedious joke. With her training, education

—or lack of it—and background she was not immoral but unmoral. Right was what she wanted, wrong was that which was unpleasant. She seldom acted on impulse, but when she did instinctively she did the thing that would result in pleasure, profit, or a combination of the two for herself.

SHE was in her fourteenth year when she made the important discovery that she loved to dance and did it gracefully and naturally without premeditation or instruction.

The twin P's of the turbulent twenties were in their heyday. Prohibition had made crime so rich a field to cultivate the criminal had achieved a social sanction never before known in Western culture. Prosperity, which many acclaimed as inextricably joined to Prohibition, had made work and ready money almost universal. A grimy, black-mustached Italian parked his hurdy-gurdy at the curb of Tenth Avenue near Thirty-ninth Street and began to grind his tinkling wares out for the approval of the sidewalk crowd. His repertoires was limited and chosen for the neighborhoods he served: "The Sidewalks of New York," which never failed to call patriotic approbation from the Empire City's denizens, "Sweet Rosie O'Grady," "Little Annie Rooney" and 'Finnegan's Wake" for the Irish clientele, "O Solo Mio" and "Santa Lucia" for the Italians and "Dardanella" as a concession to modernity.

Louella listened as the first tune tinkled from the barrel-organ and something outside her own volition stirred in her. She began dancing, waltzing slowly, gracefully, with deep, almost curtseying dips at each accented third note, holding her abbreviated skirts by the hem daintily between thumb and forefinger, as if she took a delicate, light pinch of snuff, swinging her entire slender body with an innate grace as supple as the bending of a young tree in the breeze. The waltz tune gave way to the jigging cadences of "Finnegan's Wake" and she put her knotted fists on her hips, held her arms akimbo and fell naturally into the tripping shuffle of a breakdown. She had no idea why she danced. Until the hurdy-gurdy had begun to play she had no thought of it, but at the tinkling, mandolin-like notes something outside herself —or perhaps deep inside—said, "Dance!" and dance she did as gracefully as the ladies she'd seen at the Greeley Square Theatre at Sunday matinees, moving effortlessly, naturally, the urge and will to dance arising in her as the sap flows in a tree at springtime.

She danced until the last tune had been played and the swarthy Orpheus had taken up the handles of his cumbersome wheeled lyre and passed on up Tenth Avenue. Then for the first time she stopped to draw breath and saw the quarters, dimes and fifty-cent pieces on the sidewalk at her feet, a golden—or, more strictly, silver—tribute to her artistry.

She stooped to gather them and by some alchemy of avarice her brain which could not work the simplest problem in percentage or division made ready computation of the coins. Four dollars sixty-five cents. More than the pawn broker would have given for a watch pilfered from some lurching drunk's pocket, more than five hundred stolen handkerchiefs would bring; a greater return than three days' shoplifting in the dime stores—and no cops to run from, no danger of arrest; no specter of the reform school leering at her elbow. This *was* a racket! She tied the silver offering in her none-too-clean handkerchief, ran after the Italian, caught up with him at Forty-first Street.

He cast a look of black Sicilian reproach at her. "Go away," he told her crossly. "You maka da dance, da peoples all t'row moneys at you, none for me. You poota my beezness on da bom. Go 'way!"

"Aw, Mister—"

"Go 'way, I talla you!" He halted, snatching off his battered broad-brimmed black slouch hat, and made a whipping gesture toward her with it, as one might shoo a stray dog from following him.

"But, gee, Mister, I like to dance. I love it—"

"Dan you go danca somew'ere else. You no' come after me an' maka beezness no good."

Louella considered him with wide and humid hazel eyes. A tear gleamed on her long black lashes like a small diamond on a background of black velvet. "Aw, gee, Mister, please—"

Antonio Ciofici was a true son of the Southland. Next to Chianti, Gorgonzola and ravioli his interests centered on the fair and frail sex, stretching across the gap from fourteen to forty, or a little bit beyond each way, and the tearful girl who stood pleadingly before him was a spectacle to melt a harder, less susceptible heart than his. "I talla you w'at," he compromised as he appraised her slender immature form with bright, experienced eyes, "I talla you w'at, girl. You come wid me an' maka da dance, an' we spleet da moneys, two for me an' one for you—you see, I gotta my organ rant to pay for"—as the corners of her mouth drew down in protest at the proposed division of the spoils. "I gotta da rant to paya for da organ, an' da wife an' *bambini*—"

"All right," Louella agreed unexpectedly. "You're on, Mister, but I keep what I made back there," she nodded down the street toward the scene of her late triumph.

"Hokay," he raised his shoulders in a shrug of resignation. "You keepa da moneys you took in backa dare, we spleeta da rast lak I say. *Si?*"

"*Si,*" she acquiesced, and from Forty-first to Seventy-second Street, acrosstown to Third Avenue and downtown to the upper reaches of the Bowery she trudged with Tony Ciofici, danced while he played and yielded up two-thirds of the coins that fell clinking and bouncing at her feet on the sidewalks.

The proceeds of her day of dancing with Antonio Ciofici totaled almost twenty dollars and with this she bought herself some clothes which were, amazingly enough, not like a shop girl's dream of "class," but restrained and in good taste. Instinct, that had never played her false, told her that in the slender girlish beauty, and even more in the full ripening of her perfectly-made body, she had something of incalculable value, a promissory note that, if she used it skillfully enough, could be repeatedly endorsed and cashed, yet need not necessarily be paid at maturity.

She might have been as ignorant as a savage, but she was no fool, this product of the slum tenements and sidewalks. Somewhere in her family tree a finer grade of sap had run than coursed in the veins of her parents. Some Irish squire, perhaps a coroneted earl, must have been smitten by a fresh-cheeked peasant face, a saucy red mouth and a pair of gleaming Irish eyes. Louella was an atavism, a throwback, a reversion to aristocratic ancestral type.

But the offer of her services met with rebuffs. The movies had dealt vaudeville its death-blow and even chorus girls with experience were a drug upon a glutted market. Besides, her very youth was against her. No manager wished to involve himself with the Gerry Society's agents or the truant officers; not while a swarm of girls with birth certificates was cluttering up his office. Finally, after much argument and artistic, conscienceless lying, she secured a place in the chorus of a burlesque house in Newark, and six times a day jigged and cavorted in tawdry tinselled costumes as atmosphere and backdrop for those proud ladies of creation, the strip-teasers.

She was eighteen and mightily discour-

aged when Luck finally rapped on her door with an imperious knock. Ma'amselle Chichi, the show's stellar attraction, had been out on a party and had imbibed not wisely but decidedly too well. Gin and Chartreuse and Curaçao and champagne are excellent and healthful in moderation and unmixed, but Ma'amselle Chichi had been in an experimental frame of mind that night, and sought to ascertain results to be obtained from mixing them in allopathic quantities.

RESULTS were little less than cataclysmic. At ten o'clock next morning Ma'amselle Chichi was, to quote her friend La Belle Romona who had sought to waken her in vain, "stiffer'n a board." By noon her rigor gave way to a condition variously described as *mania à potu,* jimjams, the horrors, and delirium tremens in which she furnished an obligato of terrified shrill screams while she watched sinuous pink snakes pursue agile green monkeys up and down the walls of her room.

The manager was in a state that bordered neurasthenia. "With luck like mine a feller could have engine trouble with a pushcart!" He clasped his hands against his temples and lurched drunkenly across the stage.

"That won't get you anywhere, Sollie," Louella advised him. "Th' customers will tear th' chairs up if you don't give 'em an act as good or better than Chichi's, an'—"

"O-oh!" The manager turned on her with heavy sarcasm. "An act as good or better than Ma'amselle Chichi's she tells me, an' Chichi th' highest-paid broad on th' burlesque wheel. I s'pose you know just where an act like that can be dug up in a hurry, Miss McCarthy?"

"Sure." Louella shrugged contemptuously. "I got ten o' everything that bum has, an' maybe fifteen. Gimme a break, will you, Sollie? I'll lay 'em in th' aisles."

"I'm a sucker," Sollie Saks lamented dismally. "A no-good bummer, but I'm taking a chance on you, McCarthy. Go up to Chichi's dressin' room an' have th' wardrobe mistress fix you up wid her costumes. If you make good you're hired at sixty-five a week, but if they give you the raspberry I get my hands on your neck!"

Louella smiled at him. The irritating smile of one who was not born yesterday. "If I make good you'll have to come through with a hundred a week, Sollie, or it's no soap."

To say her début was sensational would be like saying that Niagara Falls is cute. Announced as "Ma'amselle Rin-tin, our little Lady of Sophistication!" it could not be said that she danced, nor, precisely, that she walked. She moved with a peculiar lightness, almost as if wafted on a breeze, and the rustle of stiff taffeta accompanied her progress. A long fur-collared evening wrap enveloped her from throat to feet, she held it tightly clasped about her as she wafted to the center of the stage and pirouetted in the spotlight's coned-down glow a moment. Then lazily she turned and sauntered toward the far wing and with a languid gesture shrugged out of the taffeta-lined wrap and handed it to someone waiting to receive it. From then on it was as if a perfect strip routine were being done by a chaste white marble statue and the audience went absolutely wild, clapping, stamping, whistling, bellowing, "Come back! Come back an' give us more!"

At the end of her act she took ten curtain calls and still the customers would not let the show go on, so finally she did a thing unprecedented in burlesque, made a curtain speech. "Have a heart!" she begged as she posed statuesquely beautiful for her eleventh bow. "What d'ye expect a girl to do, pull off her skin an' slink around in her bones?"

That tied it in a double wall-and-crown knot. Mademoiselle Rin-tin not only had the hottest act in burlesque, she was a wit

of the first water and a good sport in the bargain.

Her future was assured, and two years later she took New York by assault as she had taken Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington.

WHEN Purity, spelled with a large, impressive P, engulfed New York and burlesque shows were banned as indecent and subversive of public morals, by a natural process of transition she graduated to the night clubs where patrons who could spend ten dollars for a dinner and a cover charge of half as much were supposed to be less susceptible to the soft blandishments of sin than burlesque patrons who paid only half a dollar for essentially the same entertainment. Sometimes she did "Hawaiian" dances sparsely clothed in kilts of rippling silken fringe with strands of gardenias tied about her wrists and ankles; at other times her dance was "classic," and then, clothed in a clinging shrift of gossamer apple-green chiffon, her flaming hair bound in a Psyche knot with imitation emerald fillets, she slithered across the dance floor, hands raised and held before her eyes, palm-outward, but oftener she did the strip routine which had brought her first to public notice, and always, whether Hawaiian, neo-classic or frankly stripeuse, she was Mademoiselle Rin-tin with hair like a wind-blown flaming torch and nails lacquered as green as emeralds, and invariably men swarmed around her like flies about a syrup-pot.

In the easy-moneyed atmosphere of the supper clubs she had her pick of cavaliers and despite the large eyes and slim throat that gave her such a look of childish innocence Louella knew her book—knew it thoroughly by heart. Beneath the veneer of her fragile, immature beauty was the mind—and cleverness—of a back-alley cat. Like a parasite she was merciless, insatiable, and as her admirers came to learn to their great cost, gave nothing more substantial than promises for the jewelry and hard cash they bestowed.

It was while she was dancing at Club 19 she met Erick, a rather heavy-set young man with a square chin cleft by a deep dimple, blue eyes set far apart and yellow hair that fitted his head like a skullcap. Clean-looking, alert, extremely polite he was, and when he spoke there was a Middle Western tang to his words.

She liked him instantly, and liked him more as their intimacy progressed. She had no idea what he did, for with her the born New Yorker's habit of minding his own business was a passion, and she asked no questions of her friends, but from scraps of conversation he let drop she understood that he was somehow connected with the press, and with her intuitive flair for publicity she chose to cultivate their intimacy still more.

Sunday, December 7, 1941, dawned peacefully, a winter day as sharp and cold and bright as newly-minted silver. Louella did not see the morning light, for she lay in her silk-sheeted bed behind drawn shades and slept as usual till early afternoon, and when she finally emerged from her apartment and walked down Central Park South in a three-piece tweed suit with a coat tailored so it was flatteringly tight over sleek hips and high breasts bull-voiced newsboys broke the Sunday quiet with stentorian bellows: "Japs Bomb Pearl Harbor! . . . Half Our Fleet Believed Lost! . . . Pres'dunt Calls on Congress to Declare War!"

"Paper, lady?" a man thrust an extra at her.

"No, thank you." She drew back as from contaminating contact.

VAGUELY, almost disinterestedly, she wondered what war would do to her business. It ought to help it. She'd heard older men of her acquaintance tell about

the healthy profits they'd made in the last war. Maybe the lush, free-spending days of the twenties would come again. She hoped so. She hadn't had the chance to cash in on the former war's hysteria, but this time—!

A few days later Erick rang her up at her apartment. "Can I see you right away, Lou?"

"Now? Right away?" she asked incredulously. "I've just got up; I'm not dressed—"

"That's all right. I want to make you a proposition."

"I don't proposition so good in the morning, Erick. See you at the club tonight."

"This won't wait, Lou. It's business."

"H'm? Monkey business?" She had had early morning calls before—business calls that turned out to be something quite different.

"Don't be a fool!" His voice took on a sharp edge of annoyance. "It's about my paper. I want to sign you on as a sort of assistant reporter, and must see you before you go to the club tonight."

"What d'ye mean, assistant reporter? I've no more education than a fiddler's tyke. You know I can't spell cat the same way two times in a row."

"You can swing this assignment all right, better than anyone, and the boss has taken the rubber off the roll for my expense account. It'll mean some easy extra money for you."

"Oh, all right. Give me half an hour to dunk myself and get some clothes on like a good guy, will you?"

His proposition was absurdly simple. With war a censorship had been clamped down on everything pertaining to the Army and Navy. Soldiers and sailors were forbidden to tell anything, whence they came, and whither they were going, the names and numbers of their ships and units, what orders they had received—everything. "And the public has a right to know these things," he ended. "If the government thinks that it can keep Americans in ignorance of what goes on it's got another guess coming. The old man—my editor—is fit to be tied over all this hush-hush stuff, and he's put it up to me to get the dope. That's where you come in. You circulate around among these tin soldiers and dry-land sailors, butter 'em up a little, ask 'em innocent questions, and report to me. That's all there is to it. If the government would let us in on things we shouldn't have to get our news this way, but if that's the way they want to play we'll take cards in the game. Are you on?"

"How much is there in it for me?"

"Well, the sky's the limit, for the present, anyhow. I'll slip you ten bucks for each piece of information you get me, and it doesn't matter whether it's important or not. Even a little bit helps, and sometimes things that don't seem important turn out to be hot tips."

"Okay, Mister, you're on. Want a slug of bourbon, or don't you take the stuff so early in the morning?"

"Fill 'er up," he ordered. "We ought to drink success to our partnership. We'll show those bureaucrats in Washington they can't push American newspapermen around."

THE information service thus informally set up worked perfectly. Louella had not cared for service men, their salaries were too small to make them of importance. But now she set herself to cultivate them and found them very likeable and not at all hard to talk to. At first she could not tell an infantryman from an aviator, but under Erick's patient instruction she learned to read insignia of service and indicia of rank. The Navy was a little harder than the Army, but she soon mastered it:

"One stripe's an ensign, one and a half a lieutenant junior grade, two stripes mean a full lieutenant. . . ." And when she looked at them with starry-eyed devotion, lips parted, breath coming a little faster as she asked them of their homes and life in camp or aboard ship, where they'd been and where they were expecting to be ordered—what lonely young man, flattered by the patent hero-worship of a lovely, famous woman, could forbear to open up his heart, to pose just a little, and show off by whispering a word or two of something he should not reveal— "Don't breathe a word of this, we're not supposed to tell, but . . ."

Singapore fell, Bataan fell, like an ever-rising tide the hordes of little yellow men from the Island Empire crept across the Netherlands East Indies, through the coral islands of the Southern Ocean, nearer to the outposts of Australia, and Erick complimented her on her astuteness as a reporter, paid her promptly for each piece of information, and encouraged her in the good work of making monkeys of those stuffed shirts in Washington.

Oddly, he would not let her telephone her news to him, nor give it to him at the club. Sometimes she told him what she'd found out as they walked uptown to her apartment, sometimes he called on her in the morning, sometimes she went to his apartment in East Fifty-four Street with fresh and juicy morsels of intelligence. Once when he had not met her at the club she took a taxi to his flat and, intent on letting him know that a transport was to sail from Army Base next morning, forgot to ring before she let herself in. She stepped into the lamplit living room to find him in deep consultation with three other men. All four were bent above a map spread on the table. Next Erick was a compact, lean man, very ugly, with thick black eyebrows and a yellowish skin. Beyond him sat a stout man with a perfectly round face and fat cheeks that threatened to bury small round blue eyes, and farthest from the door a man who made her catch her breath with a quick gasp of swift, instinctive fright. Not that he was ugly. Far from it. He was tall, broad-shouldered, well set-up. His lean, strong features, shaded by a wisp of corn-colored mustache, were gashed across the left cheek and forehead by a long-healed sword wound, and there was a hint of military erectness in his carriage, even while he sat. His face was studious, unsmiling, and the eyes between the blond mustache and the brushed-back short blond hair were gray and hard as bits of agate inlaid in his face.

"Louella!" Erick exclaimed almost in panic. "Why didn't you ring?"

"I'm sorry," she apologized. "Just got a hot tip and hurried over. I didn't know you had company; I'll scram—"

"By no means, Mademoiselle," the strange hard-eyed man rose quickly. "We have heard a great deal about you, and all of it is good. Be seated, please, and tell us what it is you have found out. These are my friends, and Erick's: Mr. Herzog, Mr. Schlatz. Gentlemen"—he swept the other two with a direct, almost contemptuous glance—"Miss McCarthy, known on the stage as Mademoiselle Rin-tin."

They rose like automatons, bowed stiffly from the hips, sat down again and watched her with bright interrogative eyes.

"I am Major Grenovik, late of the Norwegian Army, now a journalist in New York," the big blond man added. There was a graciousness, a suave, foreign-born something in his manner that seemed to put extraordinary value on her presence. A silver cigarette case with a raised design that might have been a crest appeared in one of his strong, shapely hands. "Will you smoke?" the words were commonplace enough, but the way he spoke them made them seem a favor asked of royalty.

"Thank you." She chose a cigarette, set it glowing in the flame of the lighter he extended and smothered back an exclamation of repugnance as she inhaled the smoke. The tobacco was Egyptian, heavy, oily, subtly spiced and perfumed. His cold gray eyes were on her with a sort of merciless insistence, and she gave a small involuntary shudder. It was one thing to take off her costume piece by piece before a clamorously delighted audience, something else to feel those hard eyes on her, seeming to undress her to the final stitch, then probe beneath her skin like a surgeon's instrument. He was courtesy itself, urbane, suave, even deferential, but he frightened her. In all her life she had not been so panic-strickenly afraid of a man.

"I—I don't think I ought to tell you what I've found out," she faltered. "Erick—Mr. Linz—pays me for exclusive rights—"

"You need not make yourself uneasy about that, Mademoiselle. Erick has no secrets from us. My two associates are Netherlanders, Dutch journalists who escaped to this country. They and I have pooled our interests and Mr. Linz had kindly offered his help. What he knows we know, what we find out we tell him. You comprehend?"

SHE nodded. It seemed reasonable, but somehow there was something just a little out of focus, just a little incongruous, like coral ear-rings on a redhead or dark lipstick on a blonde. Without quite understanding she sensed it in the constrained air of the room, in the fact that Erick had not spoken since his protest at her unannounced entrance, in the almost servile manner of the other men toward Grenovik. "Okay, Erick?" she asked.

"Louella!" his rejoinder was a reproof. "Hasn't the major said so? Of course, it's all right. Tell him everything he wants to know."

HEADLINES shouted from the front pages: "Saboteurs Captured on Long Island . . . President Orders Court-Martial Convened. . . . F.B.I. Begins Intensive Spy Hunt."

Louella was just leaving the club when a page boy handed her a memo. "Mr. Linz says come to his place right away."

"No, I can't tell you on the 'phone," Erick refused when she rang him up. His voice was agonized, almost hysterical. "But it's important, desperately so. Come right away, Louella; don't stop for anything."

He was pacing up and down the living room like a caged beast that counts and recounts its bars when she let herself into the apartment. She saw that he was dressed for traveling. Two packed handbags stood by the door, his hat and light raincoat lay on a chair. There was a trapped, desperate expression in his eyes as he looked at her.

"Erick! What in the world—"

"You've been a good sport, Lou," there was the low, hard raucousness of tearing paper in his voice. "You've played on the level with me, and I won't leave you with the bag. We've got to scram, but fast."

"Together?" she asked coldly. "That's a novel way of propositioning a girl, Erick, but—"

"Don't be a fool! They're apt to put the finger on us any moment."

"Who?"

"The G-Men, or von Dagen—you know him as Grenovik—which would be worse. We've got to get out right away, this instant, I tell you!"

"Why should the G-Men or von What's-his-name be after us—"

"Because we're spies!" He brought the word out like the flick of a whip.

"Spies? What d'ye mean—"

He burst into sudden pent-up speech;

eager, bubbling, yeasty speech, but each hurried word etched its meaning on her brain like a drop of strong acid. "You think that I'm a newspaperman. I'm not. You think that I'm an American. I'm not. I was born in Germany, and came to this country to grow up with an uncle in Iowa when I was five years old. I went to school and college there, then went back to the Reich to study medicine. The war came. The Fatherland's envious rivals determined to strangle her, and the *Fuehrer* needed every able-bodied man. I wanted to go to the battlefront, but *Der Fuehrer* knows best. He sent me back here to report on all American activities. I speak the language like a native. I know the customs—"

"You mean you ratted on America?" She stared at him with a look such as she might have cast into a pit filled with lizards and nameless crawling things.

"Of course," he met her look of contempt squarely. "I am a German. Besides, my parents are in Germany, and my little brothers and sisters. If I fail my appointed tasks they'll answer for it—"

"I catch you, hombre. It was an act, that stall about wantin' to get dope for your paper.

"You hired me to get the information so you could slip it to Adolf the Egghead. Gawd, what a sap I've been!"

"Sap or not, you're in it just as deeply as I am, and unless you make a getaway they'll have you in the spy-net too. And if the G-Men don't get us von Dagen will."

"What's he got to do with it? Ain't he just as deep in the mud as we are in the mire?"

"Not quite. He's unsuspected as yet, but they're on my trail. Somewhere I slipped up, and a spy that's known is a danger to his government. He'll take steps to silence me—to keep me from turning state's evidence or letting something slip to implicate him when they put the pressure on me—"

"You mean he'll rub you out?"

"Exactly, my dear, so—" His eyes went blank with terrified surprise and his voice snapped abruptly, like a breaking thread.

FEAR tightened on Louella like a shrinking garment even before she heard the smooth, suave, cultivated voice from the doorway. "Not so fast, *mein Junge*. You and I have things to talk about before you—how is it that the Yankees put it?—take a run-out powder?"

Ignoring Louella as if she were a piece of furniture von Dagen strode into the room and fixed Erick with a sardonic grin.

"*Zu Befehl Exzellenz*—" Erick was panting like a spent runner laboring up a hill.

"You are aware *Der Fuehrer* has no use for those that fail?"

"*Jawohl, Exzellenz*—"

"You have been careless, very careless, *mein Junge*. The Yankee agents more than half suspect you—"

"But I was just about to escape, *Exzellenz*, there is no danger—"

"*Was sangst Du?* No dangers? As a suspect you are worse than useless, *mein kind*. The Yankees are not thorough as our Gestapo, but they're no fools. They have ways of extracting information that they want—*Heil Hitler!*"

"*Heil Hitler!*" Erick echoed as he raised his right arm in a stiff salute and staggered backward as from a blow as von Dagen shot him neatly through the forehead.

Louella felt her skin grow cold and puckered as with frostbite and her trembling fingers crawled up to her throat and clamped against her mouth to stifle back a cry of horror. The spot of red on Erick's brow was spreading, gushing in a little fountain that ran down his nose and cheeks and filled the hollows of his wide-set, staring eyes. He was stepping backwards

slowly, horribly, with a terrifying look of surprise and protest on his face, and then he softened like a dummy robbed of its sawdust and fell limp and flaccid as a spineless thing, the impact of his falling body jarring the glasses on the tabourette.

"Now, *kleine Fraülein—*" von Dagen turned on Louella and smiled without parting his lips but in a way that made the dueling-scar on his cheek do a grotesque macabre dance.

"You wouldn't — you won't — oh, please!" Her eyes were wide with terror and appeal as she looked at the automatic lightly balanced in his hand.

"No, no," his short dry laugh had not much to do with humor. "Nothing so conventionally clumsy, *liebes Fraülein.* I shall not give myself the unpleasant task of disposing of you unless the Yankee law fails."

"The law?" she looked at him blankly.

"*Natürlich, Fraülein,* the law. They put murderers to death in this state, and in half an hour you will be arrested for the killing of your *cher ami.* It is well known you and he were intimate. A hundred witnesses will testify to seeing you together at Club 19. At least a dozen more will swear he visited you at your apartment at all hours of the night and day, that you came to him the same way; that you had a key to his house.

"You called on him tonight. He was packed and ready to depart—to run out on you as the quaint expression is. It will be another rather sordid story for the papers, I'm afraid. Give me your hand!"

Involuntarily she drew back, but he snatched her wrist in a paralyzing grip, spread her fingers out, then clamped them round the butt of the pistol. "You see? I wear gloves. There will be no prints on the weapon but yours. I shall go outside and telephone—I have no wish to be here when the police come, nor to have the call traced to this apartment—and when the officers arrive they'll find you here with your dead lover and the pistol with your fingerprints on it—"

"You don't suppose I'll wipe the prints away and scram the moment your back's turned?"

"I don't suppose you will, *Fraülein,*" he echoed. The impact of his fist against her face was like the slapping of water against a pier. He had struck quickly from the hip, but she had not studied the precise timing of dancing since girlhood for nothing. She had read intention in his eyes and moved her head the barest fraction of an inch as his arm rose. Not enough to keep the uppercut from landing, but sufficiently to make his knuckles miss the condyle of her jaw and crash against her cheek.

She went down like an overturned dressmaker's dummy, stunned and shaken, but not quite unconscious, and held her breath as he bent over her, folding back her eyelids.

"It is quite perfect," he murmured in grim satisfaction. "Almost too perfect. The young man tires of his entanglement and attempts to leave town. His girl friend walks in and upbraids him for his faithlessness. At last she threatens him with a pistol and he strikes her, but not quickly enough. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. She shoots him, then collapses.

"*Auf wiedersehen, güadiges Fraülein.* I doubt the police will give much credence to your stories about spies. They follow lines of least resistance, the polizi, and a saucy little murderess in the hand is worth a dozen spies in the bush."

SHE got up slowly, painfully, as the latch of the outer door clicked shut behind him. A ringing like the echo of a great bell was in her ears and her cheek hurt terribly, but she was alert, mentally on tiptoe.

Resolutely she kept her eyes averted from the thing lying on the floor, but in the

mirror she caught a reflection of Erick's white face and the pool of blood that soaked into the sand-hued broadloom. It was as if the looking glass had taken on the qualities of a photographic plate and the picture of the murdered man was fixed indelibly in its crystal depths.

As cautiously as a cat stealing up on a bird she crept to the door, opened it a quarter-inch, looked up and down the corridor and tiptoed to the entrance of the building. The hush of early morning lay upon the city and the dark, deserted street echoed small sounds hollowly, like an empty auditorium. A persistent light breze played in the branches of the curbside trees and from the North River across town the echo of a ferry's whistle seemed lonelier than the wail of a forgotten ghost. Silhouetted by the dull glow in the entranceway she paused on the low stoop, looking up and down the street, then stepped down cautiously. For a moment she pressed close against the house front, let her breath out gently with a quivering jerk, and crept down the sidewalk, keeping to the shadows.

"Glory be!" she whispered devoutly as she reached the corner. Parked at the curb was a Ford sport roadster, and as she looked at the dashboard she saw the ignition key was in place. She did not dare shoot the self-starter, but the street sloped sharply to the southward, and she climbed nimbly in behind the wheel, released the brakes and set the little vehicle coasting down the decline. It gathered speed with each rotation of the wheels, before she'd gone a hundred feet she flicked the key, pressed her foot on the pedal, set the engines turning over. From Third Avenue came the shrieking, ghostly warning of a police car's siren rushing toward the house where Erick lay with sightless eyes turned to the ceiling. They were coming east at breakneck speed. But she was going west. If her luck held. . . .

WHICH way? she wondered as she nudged her throttle wider open, slipped through a red light and turned southward into Lexington Avenue. She was a fugitive from justice now, wanted by the police, wanted by the F.B.I., in desperate danger from von Dagen and his satellites if she escaped the dragnet.

Instinctive memory prompted her. Since she had been a little girl—since she first read Uncle Tom's Cabin—her nights had been dream-haunted, and the sleep-vision had been progressive, like a serial read in a magazine or the episodes of an adventure movie issued once a week. It had begun when she was eight or nine years old when she fell into bed exhausted from a day of dodging truant officers, helping herself to knickknacks from the five and ten and snatching fruit from pushcarts. She had scarcely closed her eyes when she found herself walking up a long avenue of cedars that led to a house framed by oak and birch and maple trees. It looked down on a spreading lawn set with small beds of phlox and zinnias and petunias and red roses climbed up the pillars of its porch. It was not new or very well kept but it had that air of mellowness and dignity that only old houses much lived in can have, and seemed to look benignly at her. The air was heavy with the scent of flowers and the moonlight slanting through the trees was the brightest she had ever seen.

A little sigh, more of content than admiration, pushed past her lips as through the shifting shadows of the trees she saw the chaste white front of the house for the first time. Somehow, even in that first dream, she had a feeling of familiarity with it, a feeling almost strong as a conviction that she had been there before, that after years or perhaps æons of wandering she had come home.

Daylight drove the dream away, but not the memory of the dream. Next night she found herself once more on the moss-

grown gravel of the driveway, walking toward the house.

Night after night she dreamed, and each dream made her more familiar with the place. She mounted the low steps of the broad veranda, passed through the unlatched doors of hand-hewn walnut, and learned to know the old rooms of the house by heart—the wide, high-ceilinged hallway with the gilt-framed portraits on its walls and heirloom pieces of mahogany, the sweeping curve of the wide staircase with its white-and-walnut dining room with its sideboard of almost-black mahogany on which a crested silver service stood, and the long, polished dining table giving back soft echoes of the sparkling glass and gleaming silver in the soft light from the Georgian candelabra; the tall-windowed drawing room, all apple-green damask and rosewood, with the ormolu-framed Lafayette mirror above the white marble mantel, and the broad bed chambers with their curtains of sheer dimity and great four-poster bedsteads topped with ruffled canopies. She knew them all and loved them with the pride of personal possession. Night after night, dream after dream, she visited the old place till she knew it intimately as she knew Tenth Avenue and its cross streets or the squalid five-room flat where her parents bickered endlessly and alcoholically and her tangle-headed, grimy brothers and sisters crowded like young pigs in a sty.

Strangely, the house of her dreams seemed forever deserted. Though it had every indication of being lived in, she saw no one in its grounds or rooms, though once or twice she thought she caught the wraith-like shade of a small boy, a lad about her own age, who smiled at her and tried to speak. But the impression vanished almost quickly as it came, and she was left in undisputed possession of the big, silent old house.

"When I grow up I'm goin' to buy that place," she told herself repeatedly. When adolescence brought her sounder judgment she said, "Some day I'm goin' to have a place just like it." Grown to womanhood, she sometimes told herself half cynically, half longingly, "Some day when I have the time I'm goin' South and see if there is really such a place as that Shangri-la I used to dream about."

Now with the police siren shrieking on her trail an avenging fury she leant back on the cushions of the little stolen car and steered toward the Canal Street entrance of the Holland Tunnel. "Here I come, Dixie Land," she announced as the wind whipped her red hair behind her like the flame of a torch-racer's flambeau. "Roll out the red carpet and strew flowers in my path."

THE lookout had not been broadcast for her when she reached the Tunnel and she rode unmolested into New Jersey. At an all-night drug store in Newark she bought peroxide of hydrogen and ammonia, locked herself in a pay toilet booth in the Pennsylvania Station and bleached her fiery red hair to a soft gold. Considering her lack of practice and the short time at her disposal she made a neat job of it, and when she had removed the trade-mark green lacquer from her nails and replaced it with a decorous pale-rose polish she felt that she was fairly on her way to anonymity.

At Elizabeth she had another piece of luck. Standing before a saloon near the station was a limousine with New York tags, and while its chauffeur drowned his cares in successive mugs of beer she deftly exchanged license plates with it.

There was about two hundred dollars in her pocket book. Not much, but enough to enable her to buy some clothes in Wilmington and pick up a serviceable little automatic at a pawn shop in Baltimore.

She had a few bad moments entering

Washington. Surely the police would be on the lookout for her there, she thought, but she drove through the congested streets without an incident, receiving nothing more than looks of admiration from the motorcycle policemen flashing past her. Two hours later she was driving through Maryland toward the Virginia border.

The road reeled out behind her like a paid-out rope as she urged the small car to greater speed. She'd fooled von Dagen when she pretended to be knocked unconscious; he'd probably been watching the papers for news of her arrest; by now he must have realized she'd escaped. He would not dare to go to the police himself, nor take a chance on sending them a message, but—"I shall not give myself the task of eliminating you unless the law fails," he had told her. Was he satisfied the law had failed? She shuddered at the thought, for he'd have no more compunction about shooting her than he had shown when he killed Erick.

Meantime it behooved her to take thought of the immediate future. She had something like thirty dollars left. The clothes she'd bought were good; years of large income had accustomed her to patronizing the best shops, she had forgotten how to buy cheaply. Thirty dollars—not much more than chicken feed. She'd have to get a job of some sort, but what? Burlesque was closed to her, so was night club entertaining. She had no aptitude or training or ability for other work. Her education was too limited to qualify her as a salesgirl in a dime store. Modeling? Perhaps. She had the figure for it, but did she dare? Too many sugar daddies knew Mademoiselle Rin-tin—mostly to their cost. It would be dangerous to work in any place where they were apt to bring their wives or daughters or "friends." Her bleached hair and subdued nail polish would help her get by for a while, but not for long. Someone, some day, would be sure to recognize her. "Then it's the hot squat for little Lou—or von Dagen," she muttered. Of the two she thought she'd choose the chair at Sing Sing.

She glanced from left to right along the lonely road. Didn't they have motor courts down here? She hadn't seen one in the last three hours, and she most emphatically did not want to register at the hotel at Titusville.

"If only I could find a nice, clubby little—*oh-a!* she broke the sentence off half uttered. Leading from the highway was an avenue of cedars and at its far end stood a white-porticoed old house framed in a growth of oak and birch and maple trees. It looked down on a spreading lawn set with small beds of phlox and zinnias and petunias, and red roses climbed up the pillars of its porch.

"Good Lord!" her hands shook on the steering wheel as she looked unbelievingly between the trees. This was no coincidence, no trick of faulty remembrance. Every detail of the scene was impressed on her mind as a stylus impresses itself on wax. This was not memory; it was recognition!

Confidently as if she were turning in at her own home she swung the little car into the driveway, raced up the moss-grown graveled road, came to a skidding stop before the low porch.

THE old house seemed unoccupied. There was no sound or sign of life about it, but she ran up the three low steps leading to the portico and seized the brass knocker in a gloved hand. *Rap-rap-rap,* the strokes fell on the sounding-plate in sharp staccato. She waited for a moment, heard no response to her knock, and rapped again.

A shuffling step came from the hallway, the big glass doorknob turned irresolutely, and a black face peered at her inquiringly. Then: "Lawdie Massie, hit's de ghos'

lady!" the Negress cried and leaped back from the opened door with an agility that belied her enormous bulk. "Git gone away from yere, ghos' gal, you got no bizness ha'ntin' in de daytime!"

"What in the world?" Louella's words were crisply clipped, authoritative. "How dare you call me a ghost?"

"'Caise dat's whut yuh is, sho' 'nough!" the woman answered, and her fat cheeks trembled like the dewlaps of a hound. "Ah's seen yuh creepin' quiet as er mouse eroun' dis place fer twen'ty y'ars an' 'mo', but on'y in de nighttime. Whaffo' yuh come a-ha-ntin' in de day?"

"What is it, Christine?" there was a superb gentility in the voice that came from the hallway behind the servant, and Louella thrilled in response to it as a piano sometimes sounds responsible notes to a violin's tones.

"Hit's de ghos' lady, Mist' Calvert. She's done come ter ha'nt us in de daytime!

"The ghost lady?" A young man laid his hand on the great Negress' shoulder, put her gently aside and smiled at Louella through the pebbles of neat rimless spectacles.

"I beg your pardon, madam—*ah!*" His apology broke on a sharp exclamation of surprise, and like the servant he fell back a step. His lips opened, then shut again. "Is—is it really you?" he faltered.

"Of course, it is," she answered almost sharply, "and I can't imagine what possesses you two. I'm no ghost, but Louella McCarthy from New York, and I've lost my way and I'm out of gas, and hungry—" Her chin and lower lip began to tremble, and tear drops shone on her dark lashes. It was a swell act she was putting on, though she did say so as shouldn't.

"Dear me," he stood aside and bowed with just a trace of old-world courtesy. "I'm terribly sorry. Won't you come in, Miss McCarthy? I was just about to have tea, and if you'll join me I shall feel flattered."

Tea was served in the library, a great high-ceilinged room with comfortable leather chairs and divans and walnut cases built around the walls. Louella recognized it instantly, she'd seen it hundreds of times, and remembered saying to herself when she first dreamed of it, "That library has all th' books in all th' world in it."

Christine brought in the heavy Sheffield tray with fresh-made popovers as rich and yellow as gold from the mint, sandwiches of thin-sliced white bread spread with country butter and chopped watercress, homemade strawberry jam and little, thin, crisp butter cookies. Hot water seethed in a big silver kettle set above a spirit lamp, the teapot and the sugar bowl and creamer were Georgian plate engraved with a crest. Last of all she set a cruet of Amontillado and two bubble-thin glasses on the tabourette. Despite her wrestler's bulk she stepped as softly as a cat, and though her manner was that of a trained, efficient servant when Louella cast a sidelong glance at her she saw the whites of her eyes showing and a look of fascinated fear on her black features.

"It's really most extraordinary," Calvert Doheny told her as he poured the blood-hued sherry into their glasses and extended his cigarette case. "I hope you will forgive Christine and me for our behavior when you came, but the fact is Rollingwood is haunted, has been for twenty years, and you're remarkably like the lovely little ghost that haunts it."

Louella looked at him with interest. He was different from any man she'd ever known, not very old—about her own age, she surmised, perhaps a year or two older—with clear-cut, almost delicate features, kind blue eyes behind the lenses of neat unrimmed spectacles and a lock of fair hair falling over his forehead. His smile was friendly and infectious and the striking

impression he made was one of effortless candor. There was no need to tell her money had helped make him what he was or that everything he had by inheritance had been given every chance to grow. The final product was a type with which she was entirely unfamiliar, but of which she approved without reserve.

"A ghost?" she echoed, letting a cloud of cigarette smoke veil her eyes.

"Quite so. There seems to be no reason for the haunting, no one was ever murdered here, and though the Union officers used the house as headquarters during the Civil War there were no scenes of violence enacted. It's just an ordinary, commonplace old house, or was till twenty years or so ago, when the hauntings began."

"You say it's haunted by a woman?"

"Well, yes, it was a woman's specter when I last saw it, but it began as a little girl not more than eight or nine years old. Next year the ghost was slightly older, by the time I came back home from college she was a débutante, and she'd grown lovelier every year. I used to lie awake and creep downstairs when everybody was asleep so I could see her when she came. Sometimes I spoke to her, but she never took the slightest notice of me."

"You've said she is like me. Is she a blonde?"

"D'ye know, I can't quite say? I should have taken notice of her hair, but she generally came by moonlight, and *la nuit tous les chats sont gris*—all cats are gray at night—you know. But though I can't say certainly, I'm almost sure her hair was gold like yours, and I was desperately in love with her from my tenth to eighteenth years."

"And now?" Her wide eyes seemed suddenly drowsy.

"*Now? A quoi me servia chérir une esprite*—of what avail is it to love a ghost? She never saw me, never took the slightest notice of me, and for the last few years she's been more conspicuous for her absense than her presence."

"She was a very foolish little ghost, I think." The lashes quivered over her wide eyes and her laugh gurgled like clear water poured from a silver vase.

SHE had dinner with him, spent the night in one of the big bedrooms she had known so intimately since childhood, and next morning came down to breakfast in a green gabardine slack suit that made her look like a daffodil blooming on a slim green stalk.

"I wish that it were possible for you to stop a little longer here," he told her sincerely as they finished their corn cakes, fried eggs and rich country bacon. "It's really very lonely. You see, I'm just recovering from a rather serious illness, and my parents are both dead—"

"Why not?" she cut in gaily. "I'm really in no hurry. I'm due in Florida sometime next month, but until then I'm at a loose end, and—well, you see, I'm an actress, or sort of one at least, and conventions don't mean much to me. Whatever the real truth may be we're not supposed to have such things as reputations—except bad ones, possibly—so if you're not afraid of being compromised I certainly am not."

If she had offered him the Kohinoor or Hope Diamond he could not have been more incredulously delighted. "You will?" he asked exultantly. "You'll spend a week here?"

"Two weeks, if you can stand me that long."

The days that followed were like heaven to her. She had never had a chance to play since she had been a street gamin running wild in Hell's Kitchen, and the lazy drifting hours where time was measured by no mechanism of clocks were sweet to her as wellsprings in a desert or soft rain after drought. There was a grove of pines behind the house and through its softly-car-

peted lanes they walked while the black boughs rustled like a bride's dress and the air was sweet with the scent of balsam. Beyond the woods was a small stream and on it they canoed, drifting with the lazy current while their small boat rocked and heaved gently with a motion that seemed not of the water but of the long systole and diastole of the drowsy earth. She was winsome as a pixie in her green slack suit, running weightlessly as wind between the tall trees or poised laughing on a creeper-grown stone wall, the sunlight frothing in her golden hair as she looked back at him and challenged him to overtake her.

They had been on a picnic. The basket with the necks of two long Rhine wine bottles peeping from the folded napkins lay empty at their feet, he lay stretched on the moss underneath the maple tree and looked up at the sky through the full-leafed boughs. In tweed skirt and cardigan sweater, with her yellow hair bound by a red ribbon, her slender legs bare and her childishly small feet shod with shetland hocks and rubber-soled sport oxfords she looked like a little girl, but the sweet rondures of her body—that body that had charmed a hundred thousand audiences with its nude beauty—were those of a woman full-blown, not a child.

Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,
A flask of wine, a book of verse—and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness—
Ah, wilderness were Paradise enow,

he quoted, smiling at her.

A look no other man had ever seen came into her eyes. "I'd settle for you, Cal."

"Louella!" The access of emotion made his voice no louder than the breeze in the branches. "You—you mean you care—"

She looked at him, eyes filled to overflowing with unbidden tears, and nodded.

"Louella dear! Beloved! It seems that I've been waiting for you all my life, or longer. You are the little ghost girl that I loved so dearly come to me in radiant life and flesh. We met each other only a few hours ago, but we are welded to each other forever. Years together may force two people apart, but these few hours of our intimacy have made us each a part of the other. I love you, Louella, love you as I love the little ghost girl—no, not that way, but as a man must love the woman he marries—"

"But you don't know me, Cal," her voice was almost a wail. "You don't know anything about me. I might be a criminal, a bad woman—"

"I don't care if you are good or bad or innocent or guilty, Louella. I only know I love you, want you. . . ."

She raised her face to his, her features transfigured as by a halo, and spread her hands, palms forward, in a gesture of complete surrender. "Then here I am, Cal, yours on any terms you care to make."

THEY dined in the old banquet room with the long table with its sparkling crystal and gleaming silver shining in the soft glow of the candles like a lighted island in a shadowed sea, and afterwards they walked across the lawn and in the garden while the flowers showed as pale as pearls in the night and the air was heavy with their scents and brighter moonlight than they'd ever seen lay over everything.

She'd kissed a thousand men a thousand times, kissed them wheedlingly, or in acknowledgment of favors bestowed or expected, but all those kisses had been with her lips only. Now she kissed with lips and heart, and the ardor of her passion wakened unsuspected ardency in him, set fire to his brain and raced his blood like wine, shook him to the final cell and fiber of his being.

Now it was time to say good night, and they faced each other in the hall. "Good

night, my love," he whispered. "Good night until the morning breaks and shadows flee away."

She clasped her arms about him, drew him to her with a strength that seemed the strength of desperation. He could feel her heart beating against his, feel the warmth and perfume of her hair as she put back her head and offered him a final kiss that seemed to drain the life out of him. "Good night, my dear, dear love, good night," she whispered throatily. "If anything should happen—if one of us should never see the morning—the other one will have the memory of today with him always—and so, I think, will the one who goes first. What was it the old poet said—'Dear as remembered kisses after death'? Will you promise me one thing?"

"Anything, my sweet."

"I've seen the family burying ground beyond the pine woods. Promise that if I die first you'll see I'm buried there. I've had a feeling ever since I came here that I had not come to a strange place, but home."

"Home, indeed, my darling." He kissed her again. "Home to my house and heart."

SHE had been sleeping peacefully as a child, not dreaming, exactly, but with her sleeping mind filled with a glow of radiant happiness. Now some small sound—the clicking of a latch or brushing of a tree branch on the window pane, perhaps—woke her, and she sat up in bed, all trace of sleep gone from her. She felt a sudden sense of nameless apprehension, a tightening of the muscles of her chest beside her heart, but what it was that frightened her she had no idea.

Softly, barefoot, she crept from her chamber, reached the top of the stairs, paused at their head.

Voices murmured in the hall below. Lights flashed like heat-lightning on floor and walls and ceiling. Electric torches.

She went soundlessly down the stairs, one step at a time. Calvert in pajamas faced a group of shadowy figures whose forms were hidden in the gloom. He held a shotgun in his hand, and his voice was hard and cold as an icicle. "Get out," he ordered. "Get out of my house, or by God, I'll blow—"

"Feuer!" The echo of the pistol shots slashed through the quiet of the house, like a sword-blade through flesh.

SHE swayed blindly on the stairs a moment, clutching at the rail. Through the drifting smoke she saw Calvert in a crumpled heap at the bottom of the stairs, shot down like Erick, bleeding out his life on the spot where they had kissed each other good night "until the morning came and shadows fled away."

"You there on the stairs," a voice she recognized as von Dagen's challenged, "are you Louella McCarthy?"

She took a last look at Calvert Doheny. "Yes," she answered in a firm voice, and,

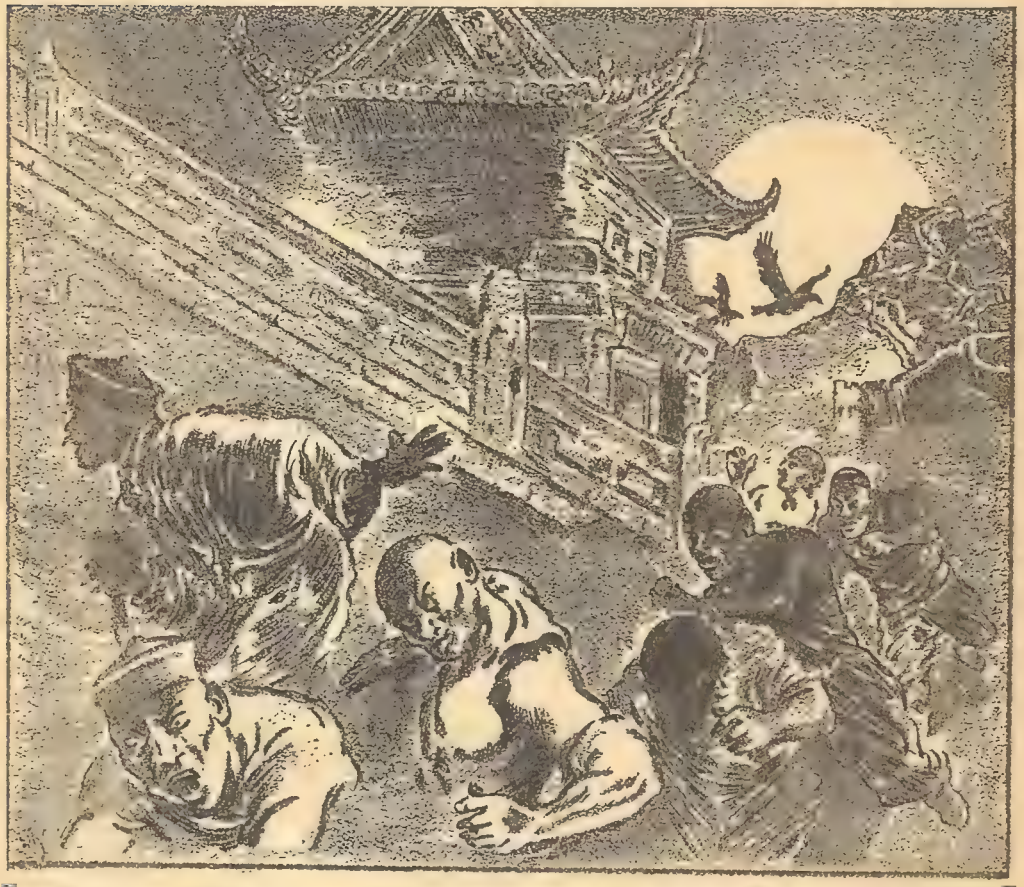
"Feuer!" the order came again and four pistols spit a fusillade of lead.

She felt a dreadful pain rip through her breast, her shoulders, her abdomen, then a single shot cracked like a snapping whip and she reeled as a blow like that of a fist crashed against her brow.

Down she toppled, down into a fathomless abyss of blackness, slipping, sliding, bumping grotesquely on the stairs till she reached the bottom and lay inert, a broken, bullet-shattered white body wrapped in a wisp of blood-stained pale amber georgette. A tremor rippled through her, and slowly, painfully, one slim hand moved, crawled laboredly across the blood-slicked floor, touched the dead man's. Then with one vast, outrageous crash the world ended.

Death in a Gray Mist

By FRANK OWEN



On a night when the fog hung low over the land, seven had come to the Black Inn to kill one

SEVEN men had gone to the Black Inn to kill Chung Kuo. They chose a night when fog hung low over the land so that their actions might not be observed. They were all strangers to each other, and also to the man whom they had come to kill. Each pictured him in an entirely different manner.

One believed that Chung Kuo was a monk in a gray robe; a second, that he was tall and austere, no longer young, a graduate of Han-lin College; a third, that he was fat and blustery, a military man who swaggered more than any mandarin of old; a fourth, that he was a business man, shrewd, penetrating, a good trader, cold,

Heading by A. R. TILBURNE

dangerous; a fifth, that he was a shopkeeper, a seller of ivory and jade, who liked to spend his evenings playing fan-tan at the inn; but the sixth, merely believed that he was a general, an important leader in China's fight to be free.

Unfortunately, Chung Kuo knew every one of them and if he had any part in the fictions that had been so deviously planted in craven minds, he was shrewd enough to divulge the matter to no one. However, he had excellent lieutenants who had proved good reporters. Chung Kuo considered it droll that seven men had come on so slight a mission, a mission that the lowliest poisonous insect might so easily accomplish. To him it seemed an abundant waste of manpower. It did not speak well for the ability of Colonel Nagai, a Japanese officer, who wished to have Chung Kuo obliterated.

The inn went by the euphonious name of Five Elm Lodge because of the stately trees that guarded it like sentinels. But locally it was called the Black Inn, because in Chinese parlance, a Black Inn is a den of thieves. Certainly on the present occasion it was living up to its reputation.

They had come to Hangchow by circuitous routes even though they had been granted safe passage by Japanese officials. But not even a renegade trusts a Jap; he will fatten on his money, but steer clear of his treachery. The seven preferred to work carefully and in their own manner. At the inn they were shown to a large room with seven beds, to use the term rather carelessly, for the sleeping accommodations consisted of only thin mattresses spread upon the cold hard floor. But the air was good for there were plenty of windows with oiled paper panes that were thrown open upon a slumbering garden.

In the dead vast middle of the night, long after the others had retired to rest, San Tak decided that he would stroll in the garden. He was irritable and upset. He had hoped that he might slay Chung Kuo and be away before morning rice, but now it appeared as if his quarry had gone from the inn and he would have to await his return. Time means nothing to the Chinese as a general thing but it meant everything to San Tak who had set out to kill. Colonel Nagai had promised him even a more lucrative assignment if he was able to complete this one with speed and efficiency. Colonel Nagai believed in war by assassination.

An enemy shot in the back was a good enemy. His entire code was built upon treachery. The Japanese war lords had praised his record many times. It was the code of the gangster but also their code. The colonel was a brilliant warrior but he had a craven's heart. He flinched when facing an enemy, but when planning nefarious schemes he was valiant. No officer had a more arrogant manner.

SAN TAK met with no opposition as he climbed through the window into the garden. Perhaps all his companions were sleeping. He hoped they were, for he was annoyed by their proximity.

The fog still haunted the garden. The air was damp and chill. Nevertheless he walked somberly along, his thoughts blending with the gloom of the night. Momentarily he regretted that he had heeded the honeyed words of Colonel Nagai. To be tracking down an unknown foe was as futile as wrestling with a wraith.

He strode along, unaware that there was hidden danger in the fog. A dry well yawned hungrily in front of him and he plunged head-first to the bottom. The bones of his neck snapped as if they were as brittle as porcelain. Thereafter he was not concerned with human affairs. In the blackness, a figure climbed down into the well and drew a good-luck piece from San Tak's sleeve.

San Tak returned not to the Inn. How-

ever seven men occupied the beds for the remainder of the night.

Not long after dawn, they rose, dressed and went to the tea-room to have morning rice. Curiously, for the first time, they studied one another. It was at that moment that knowledge came to them that they were all at the inn for the same purpose—to kill Chung Kuo. But they did not suspect that they had all been hired by the same official, Colonel Nagai. Certainly the colonel did not underestimate the resourcefulness of his enemy. Chung Kuo might easily have overcome and exterminated one opponent. He might even be able to trick two or three. But seven was an impossible number for any man to face, especially since every one of the seven was an experienced killer, who had no compunction whatever about shooting a man from ambush.

The old man who brought them rice and tea was benignant and smiling. He was also very efficient.

Finally To-jun voiced the wishes of all, when he said, "Where is your master, Chung Kuo?"

"I have no master," said the old man gently. "I am free. The sky is mine and my eyes roam at will among the stars. 'When the bells and drums sound in harmony, and the sounding-stones and flutes blend their notes, abundant blessings are sent down'."

"How can you quote from 'The Book of Poetry' when our land is overrun by Japanese?"

"The crickets too have come and gone; so endeth every blight. And now the sky is filled with abundant music, perhaps this new plague that has come upon us will have a difficult future."

"Interesting, but still you have not answered my question. Where is Chung Kuo?"

"Chung Kuo is everywhere, like the breeze that brushes your shoulder."

"But when will he return to the inn?"

"In good time, perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow. It does not seem long since I have talked with him."

"You are very loyal to Chung Kuo."

"I am loyal to any traveler who pauses for rest and tea."

One of the other renegades, Fan Su lost his temper. Never did he have much patience. "Maybe a horse-whip might give him better memory."

"Very doubtful," replied the old man, "but of one thing be assured, if I am molested you will be deprived of rice. We do not feed our enemies for long. Would I be presuming to point out that 'Five Elm Lodge' is not called 'The Black Inn' without reason. Threats are wearisome, they sour the tea."

FAN SU sprang to his feet. "I'll not stand for this!" he cried, but his arrogance was short-lived, he tripped and fell and blood flowed from his nose."

"Quite frequently," mused the old servant, "the tyrant ends up by being ridiculous."

To-jun who had started the conversation was angered that Fan Su had taken the initiative away from him. He decided that at the first opportunity he would avenge the slight. If Fan Su saw another sunrise it would be a surprise to him. To-jun had had a Japanese mother, and his father had been worthless. In a land where every man worked he had devoted his entire time to samshu. Later he became a brigand though with indifferent success. However his son followed willingly in his footsteps, with one difference, he lacked the least semblance of culture. He would kill a man or a pig with equal facility provided he was paid for it. He had long, strong fingers and a short temper. Patience was unknown to him.

Meanwhile the old servant, with complete indifference to their presence, pro-

cured a broom from a storeroom and started sweeping. The Chinese believe there is some magic efficacy attached to brooms and demons have great fear of them.

"Old man," cried Fan Su, "are we evil spirits that you would sweep away?"

"You are more qualified to answer that question than I."

"Evil, perhaps," chuckled Fan Su, after a moment, deciding that it was better to treat the matter as a bit of humor rather than appearing a fool before his companions, "but I assure you I am not a spirit."

"So I decided when you fell on your face. But now I must finish my sweeping so that I may sit in the garden and rest. Little vacancies from toil are sweet."

Lin Kia who spoke little was formulating a plan. Some time later as he strolled through the garden he encountered the old servant as though by accident.

"If you will tell me where I may find Chung Kuo, I will reward you well," he said softly.

"How well?" asked the old man.

Lin Kia slipped a gold piece into his hand. "This coin answers for me," he said.

The old servant examined the coin curiously. So long was it before he spoke, Lin Kia feared that his gift was to be rejected. He felt easier when it vanished into the ancient one's sleeve.

"Chung Kuo likes to walk by moonlight in a bamboo grove, and tonight the moon will be a disc of white jade. The most appropriate time to encounter him is during the hour of the Rat. (From 11 P.M. to 1 A.M.)"

"I, too, like to wander among the tall bamboo," murmured Lin Kia.

For the renegades the rest of that day passed lazily. They ate, sipped tea and dozed, though with one eye open. A few travelers stopped at the inn. However, not nearly as many as in the days before the Japanese blight. Now business was a mere trickle; the great trading that had gone on before had all but vanished. In the past, caravans had stopped at the inn and there was an enormous yard to accommodate the horses. Brigands, too, came in little groups. But they did most of their tradings on the highway. For a trinket of gold, or a bit of jade a man might go on living. The five elms before the lodge were known near and far. It was a place to be avoided but it was, even so, never without patrons. The evil words that were told about it were a sort of advertising. No questions were asked of the chance passerby who might loiter for a moment before continuing his journey. The tea was excellent.

NIGHT came at last. The renegades retired, all save Lin Kia who remained sipping tea at a table. It was but natural for a man to linger over his tea, for in clear tea one finds the sages.

Some time before the hour of the Rat, a slim figure moved about in the darkness of the room until he came to the mattress on which Fan Su was sleeping. A quick swing of an arm in the darkness, and Fan Su joined his ancestors. It would be morning before they discovered the dagger of To-jun imbedded neatly in the heart of Fan Su.

Meanwhile, Lin Kia walked with light step into the bamboo grove that grew a few li from the inn. His felt-soled footsteps made no sound. He was adept at stalking his prey. In his sleeve was a gun that frequently spoke but never got any answer. His only fear was that he might encounter a bamboo viper. He was inordinately afraid of insects. Deeper into the grove he walked. There was poetry in the night, with the full-blossomed moon glowing in the sky like a white chrysanthemum. It surprised him how very light it was, then with a start he realized that it was far too light. He gazed in fear over his shoulder and beheld roaring flames dogging his footsteps. The

bamboo grove had caught fire. He had been tricked. He vowed vengeance on the old servant who had placed him in so perilous a position. The flames were gaining on him and he was forced to run. But the bamboo shoots seemed intent on blocking his path. It was all he could do to push them aside. What might have happened isn't pleasant to think, had it not been for a sudden ending of the scene. Far above almost out of sight in the sky, a lone plane was flying. The flaming grove was an easy target. The bomb curved down gracefully. As it struck, the grove was not on fire anymore and Lin Kia had ceased running.

The rest of the night was peaceful, still. Then morning came.

At Five Elm Lodge, the renegades awakened, all but Fan Su whose glazed eyes had not closed throughout the flight of the moon. The others rose to their feet and gazed at the cadaver. To-jun leaned down and retrieved his knife. Not by the flickering of an eyelid did he betray his astonishment that this knife had caused the destruction of a man on whom he had vowed vengeance. Had the knife heard his vow and proceeded to carry it out without his motivation? To-jun was superstitious. He believed that the air was filled with disembodied spirits all evil. He looked up to find himself peering into the barrel of a revolver.

"I am Fan Lee," said one of the renegades. "Fan Su was my brother. No Chinese lives and sleeps in the same house as the murderer of his brother. That is the root of our philosophy. You have caused me to break the string that binds me to my brother. So you must die, I am sorry, but there is no other way out."

The gun spoke twice. They buried both bodies a short distance from the inn, without benefit of coffin, or services of any kind. There were no mourners. The six souls of the dead men could proceed whithersoever they wished. It was no concern of the renegades who had a duty to perform.

THEY returned to the inn, the four of them that remained alive. That day they ate morning rice at the same table. Some impending horror seemed to bind them together by a spell.

"If this continues," said P'ang Hao, "not one of us will survive to complete the task that brought us all to the inn. I have a growing suspicion that we are all in the same work." As he spoke he placed a bit of jade on the table before him. His three companions produced similar jade fragments.

"Those jade amulets bind us all together," mused Hu Liang. "It makes brothers of us all, the fact that we are bound together as representatives of Colonel Nagai."

"Mention the name in hushed tones," advised P'ang Hao. "It appears that this section of Hangchow is not healthy for those who are in the employ of the Japanese."

"Especially if they stop for a night or two at 'Five Elm Lodge'," added Fan Lee. "Woe unto the day that brought my brother and I to this house. Now he has hung up his hat and I will converse with him no more."

"Truly it seems that we are being decimated because we are emissaries of Colonel Nagai," said Hu Liang slowly. "Might it not be possible that the very earth is at war with the Japanese, fighting the cause of China? I had a friend who was rendered useless by a tree that fell upon him. The mist and the mountains are in league with China because for untold centuries the Chinese have lived close to the soil. For years I have carried on my work and never did I fail to complete a commission. Even bandits shuddered at my approach and look at me now, how pitifully has the mighty fallen. My sleep is disturbed by dreams

and in my dreams I am always fleeing from an unknown terror. Yes, Colonel Nagai has squandered our ability. He must have known how fraught with danger was this undertaking else he would not have sent seven of us to blot out one enemy named Chung Kuo. Alas, it was a fateful undertaking. Three of our men are dead and Chung Kuo still evades us. Is he the wind that blows through the willows, is he the cloud that effaces the moon, or the dew that bathes the flowers at dawn?"

"At 'Five Elm Lodge'," said Tsan Yen slowly, "we were told that we would discover Chung Kuo, but alas our reward was death in a gray mist. Death dwells in this inn, he is the master of the hostelry. Perhaps yon old servant is Chung Kuo. Perhaps he serves us and all the time he is laughing in his sleeve. Old man, are you the mighty Chung Kuo?"

"Would that I were," was the reply. "I am but a servant whose greatest achievement is the cooking of lentils. My work is well done and I can enjoy the quiet of the garden. But Chung Kuo is kind, he never acts like a barbarian, or as though I am beneath him. It would be a great honor if I could be the mighty Chung Kuo who so easily eludes seven assassins, but the gods have ordained it otherwise. I am not a mighty figure in New China but an old servant who joys to doze in the sun and dream of past splendors. Once I possessed a canary who sang so beautifully that I named him Tu Fu.

"A mighty mandarin wished to buy the little singer, but I refused to sell, and so although I was poor, I was richer than the mandarin for I possessed Tu Fu whom he aspired to possess. How pleasant is life when even a servant might enjoy sweet songs."

"I still believe that you are Chung Kuo," muttered P'ang Hao.

"I resent being called an assassin," said Hu Liang angrily.

"Let us not quarrel with the old man who serves us rice," said Fan Lee.

"YOU are right," agreed P'ang Hao willingly. "It is Colonel Nagai who has betrayed us. He must have known how perilous was our mission or he would not have sent seven to perform it. He cares no more for our lives than if we were enemies."

"After all we are Chinese," Hu Liang said, "and the colonel considers all Chinese are his enemies."

"Well spoken," agreed Fan Lee. "Perhaps Chung Kuo does not exist. Perhaps we were sent here on an errand that was little more than a practical joke. Even now I can see Colonel Nagai laughing. He is laughing up our sleeves."

"Your words are seasoned with wisdom," agreed Hu Liang. "Undoubtedly our comrades have been done away with by vicious Japs at the instigation of Nagai himself. As we sit here now we are all in grave danger. Any moment death may strike us down."

"If it must come, what matter," mused Fan Lee, "but it is not pleasant to think of joining our ancestors with the laughter of the colonel resounding in our ears."

"Let us destroy Nagai to stop his laughter!" burst out P'ang Hao angrily. "We are wasting time here challenging an old servant whose greatest achievement is cooking lentils."

"Or wielding a sharp knife," said Fan Lee, but no one paid the slightest attention to his observations, so intent were they on their own schemes and plans. Each had decided that he would kill Colonel Nagai and later join the Chinese forces. The business of being a renegade was becoming slightly frayed at the edges. There was no one to work for the Japanese, for to trust a Jap was more foolhardy than to sleep in a bed with a cobra.

Hu Liang voiced the thoughts of all

when he said, "It is more expedient to save our necks and live as patriots, than to continue our pursuit of Chung Kuo and die as traitors from a cause as unknown as the back of the moon."

Later that day, they left the inn and took separate paths, but they were all but one of one purpose. The one was Fan Lee who took a circuitous route and returned to the inn.

The old servant was waiting for him. He had cooked turnips and roast young pig for a celebration.

"Welcome home, General Chung Kuo," he said, bowing low.

"It is good to return quietly to rest," replied Fan Lee. "I haven't been sleeping well lately. But with Colonel Nagai neatly disposed of without any effort on my part, there will be less reason for unease. As to P'ang Hao, Tsan Yen, and Hu Liang, they are unwittingly doing me a favor. Yet my future would be at an end if they ever discovered I was really Chung Kuo. Nevertheless, I shall find a place for them, swinging from a pear tree, suspended by a red cord bound about their throats. They always prided themselves that they walked with catlike quietness, nor will they make any sound on their last creep."

Sea-Shell

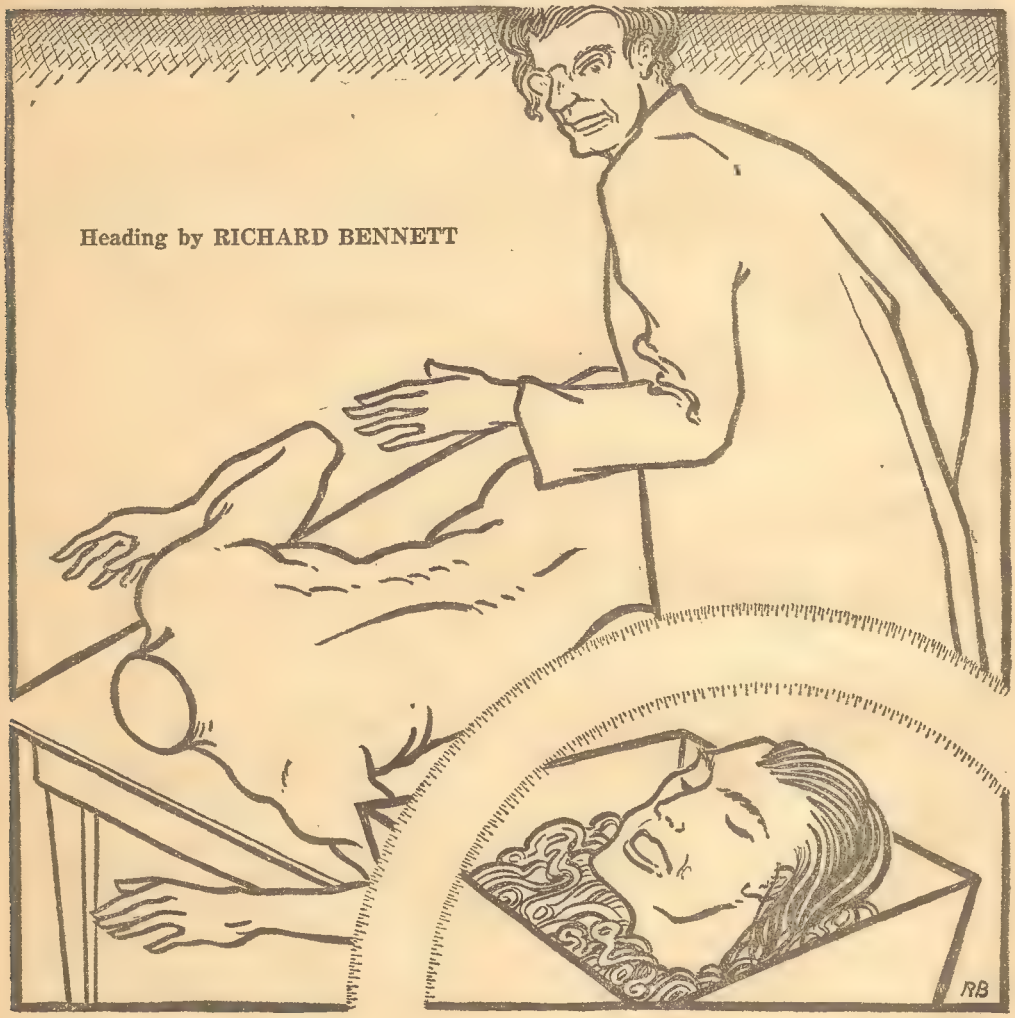
By LEAH BODINE DRAKE

STRANDED upon the sand
Here is a twisted shell:
Lift it within your hand,
Press it against your ear;
Listen! . . . and you will hear
Echo of deep-sea bell
Ringing in belfry beneath the brine,
Where mermaidens, scaled with tourmaline,
Toll a dolorous knell.
'Tis the voice of a city beneath the sea!
Gold-eyed fishes stare endlessly
At turrets and ramparts of porphyry
Drowned in a gold-green well.

Who built that city forlorn?
What was its perilous fame
That tymbal and gong and horn
Blared from the torch-lit wall?
When did its doom befall?
What was the reason it came
Crashing down over palace and keep,
A sea that rose like a mountain steep,
Quenching the living flame?
Hark! . . . do the sea-shell's echoes tell
The name of that city before she fell?
Ah, no! I can hear its cry, its bell,
But never its fabulous name!

Herbert West—Reanimator

By H. P. LOVECRAFT



Heading by RICHARD BENNETT

Here is the fifth horror-filled episode in this series—of a strange, brilliant scientist who would not believe that the dead are dead.

V. The Horror from the Shadows

MANY men have related hideous things, not mentioned in print, which happened on the battlefields of the Great War. Some of these things have made me faint, others have convulsed me with devastating nausea, while still others have made me tremble and look behind me in the dark; yet despite the worst of them I believe I can

myself relate the most hideous thing of all—the shocking, the unnatural, the unbelievable horror from the shadows.

In 1915 I was a physician with the rank of First Lieutenant in a Canadian regiment in Flanders, one of many Americans to precede the government itself into the gigantic struggle. I had not entered the army on my own initiative, but rather as a natural result of the enlistment of the man whose indispensable assistant I was—the celebrated Boston surgical specialist, Dr. Herbert West. Dr. West had been avid for a chance to serve as surgeon in a great war, and when the chance had come he carried me with him almost against my will. There were reasons why I would have been glad to let the war separate us; reasons why I found the practice of medicine and the companionship of West more and more irritating; but when he had gone to Ottawa and through a colleague's influence secured a medical commission as Major, I could not resist the imperious persuasion of one determined that I should accompany him in my usual capacity.

When I say that Dr. West was avid to serve in battle, I do not mean to imply that he was either naturally warlike or anxious for the safety of civilization. Always an ice-cold intellectual machine; slight, blond, blue-eyed, and spectacled; I think he secretly sneered at my occasional martial enthusiasms and censures of supine neutrality. There was, however, something he wanted in embattled Flanders; and in order to secure it he had to assume a military exterior. What he wanted was not a thing which many persons want, but something connected with the peculiar branch of medical science which he had chosen quite clandestinely to follow, and in which he had achieved amazing and occasionally hideous results. It was, in fact, nothing more or less than an abundant supply of freshly killed men in every stage of dismemberment.

Herbert West needed fresh bodies because his life-work was the reanimation of the dead. This work was not known to the fashionable clientele who had so swiftly built up his fame after his arrival in Boston; but was only too well known to me, who had been his closest friend and sole assistant since the old days in Miskatonic University Medical School at Arkham. It was in those college days that he had begun his terrible experiments, first on small animals and then on human bodies shockingly obtained. There was a solution which he injected into the veins of dead things, and if they were fresh enough they responded in strange ways. He had had much trouble in discovering the proper formula, for each type of organism was found to need a stimulus especially adapted to it. Terror stalked him when he reflected on his partial failures; nameless things resulting from imperfect solutions or from bodies insufficiently fresh. A certain number of these failures had remained alive—one was in an asylum while others had vanished—and as he thought of conceivable yet virtually impossible eventualities he often shivered beneath his usual stolidity.

WEST had soon learned that absolute freshness was the prime requisite for useful specimens, and had accordingly resorted to frightful and unnatural expedients in body-snatching. In college, and during our early practice together in the factory town of Bolton, my attitude toward him had been largely one of fascinated admiration; but as his boldness in methods grew, I began to develop a gnawing fear. I did not like the way he looked at healthy living bodies; and then there came a nightmarish session in the cellar laboratory when I learned that a certain specimen had been a living body when he secured it. That was the first time he had ever been able to revive the quality of rational

thought in a corpse; and his success, obtained at such a loathsome cost, had completely hardened him.

Of his methods in the intervening five years I dare not speak. I was held to him by sheer force of fear, and witnessed sights that no human tongue could repeat. Gradually I came to find Herbert West himself more horrible than anything he did—that was when it dawned on me that his once normal scientific zeal for prolonging life had subtly degenerated into a mere morbid and ghoulish curiosity and secret sense of charnel picturesqueness. His interest became a hellish and perverse addiction to the repellently and fiendishly abnormal; he gloated calmly over artificial monstrosities which would make most healthy men drop dead from fright and disgust; he became, behind his pallid intellectuality, a fastidious Baudelaire of physical experiment—a languid Elagabalus of the tombs.

Dangers he met unflinchingly; crimes he committed unmoved. I think the climax came when he had proved his point that rational life can be restored, and had sought new worlds to conquer by experimenting on the reanimation of detached parts of bodies. He had wild and original ideas on the independent vital properties of organic cells and nerve-tissue separated from natural physiological systems; and achieved some hideous preliminary results in the form of never-dying, artificially nourished tissue obtained from the nearly-hatched eggs of an indescribable tropical reptile. Two biological points he was exceedingly anxious to settle—first, whether any amount of consciousness and rational action be possible without the brain, proceeding from the spinal cord and various nerve-centers; and second, whether any kind of ethereal, intangible relation distinct from the material cells may exist to link the surgically separated parts of what has previously been a single living organism. All this research work required a prodigious supply of freshly slaughtered human flesh—and that was why Herbert West had entered the Great War.

The phantasmal, unmentionable thing occurred one midnight late in March, 1915, in a field hospital behind the lines at St. Eloi. I wonder even now if it could have been other than a demoniac dream of delirium. West had a private laboratory in an east room of the barn-like temporary edifice, assigned him on his plea that he was devising new and radical methods for the treatment of hitherto hopeless cases of maiming. There he worked like a butcher in the midst of his gory wares—I could never get used to the levity with which he handled and classified certain things. At times he actually did perform marvels of surgery for the soldiers; but his chief delights were of a less public and philanthropic kind, requiring many explanations of sounds which seemed peculiar even amidst that babel of the damned. Among these sounds were frequent revolver shots—surely not uncommon on a battlefield, but distinctly uncommon in a hospital. Dr. West's reanimated specimens were not meant for long existence or a large audience. Besides human tissue, West employed much of the reptile embryo tissue which he had cultivated with such singular results. It was better than human material for maintaining life in organless fragments, and that was now my friend's chief activity. In a dark corner of the laboratory, over a queer incubating burner, he kept a large covered vat full of this reptilian cell-matter; which multiplied and grew puffily and hideously.

ON THE night of which I speak we had a splendid new specimen—a man at once physically powerful and of such high mentality that a sensitive nervous system was assured. It was rather ironic, for he was the officer who had helped West to his commission, and who was

now to have been our associate. Moreover, he had in the past secretly studied the theory of reanimation to some extent under West. Major Sir Eric Moreland Clapham-Lee, D.S.O., was the greatest surgeon in our division. He had come in an aeroplane piloted by the intrepid Lieut. Ronald Hill, only to be shot down when directly over his destination. The fall had been spectacular and awful; Hill was unrecognizable afterward, but the wreck yielded up the great surgeon in a nearly decapitated but otherwise intact condition. West had greedily seized the lifeless thing which had once been his friend and fellow-scholar; and I shuddered when he finished severing the head, placed it in his hellish vat of pulpy reptile-tissue to preserve it for future experiments, and proceeded to treat the decapitated body on the operating table. He injected new blood, joined certain veins, arteries, and nerves at the headless neck, and closed the ghastly aperture with engrafted skin from an unidentified specimen which had borne an officer's uniform. I knew what he wanted—to see if this highly organized body could exhibit, without its head, any of the signs of mental life which had distinguished Sir Eric Moreland Clapham-Lee.

I can still see Herbert West under the sinister electric light as he injected his reanimating solution into the arm of the headless body. The scene I cannot describe—I should faint if I tried it, for there is madness in a room full of classified charnel things, with blood and lesser human debris almost ankle-deep on the slimy floor, and with hideous reptilian abnormalities sprouting, bubbling, and baking over a winking bluish-green specter of dim flame in a far corner of black shadows.

The specimen, as West repeatedly observed, had a splendid nervous system. Much was expected of it; and as a few twitching motions began to appear, I could see the feverish interest on West's face. He was ready, I think, to see proof of his increasingly strong opinion that consciousness, reason, and personality can exist independently of the brain—that man has no central connective spirit, but is merely a machine of nervous matter, each section more or less complete in itself. The body now twitched more vigorously, and beneath our avid eyes commenced to heave in a frightful way. The arms stirred disquietingly, the legs drew up, and various muscles contracted in a repulsive kind of writhing. Then the headless thing threw out its arms in a gesture which was unmistakably one of desperation—an intelligent desperation apparently sufficient to prove every theory of Herbert West. Certainly, the nerves were recalling the man's last act in life; the struggle to get free of the falling aeroplane.

What followed I shall never positively know. It may have been wholly an hallucination from the shock caused at that instant by the sudden and complete destruction of the building in a cataclysm of German shell-fire—who can gainsay it, since West and I were the only proved survivors? West liked to think that before his recent disappearance, but there were times when he could not; for it was queer that we both had the same hallucination.

The body on the table had risen with a blind and terrible groping, and we had heard a sound. I should not call that sound a voice, for it was too awful. And yet its timbre was not the most awful thing about. Neither was its message—it had merely screamed, "Jump, Ronald, for God's sake, jump!" The awful thing was its source.

For it had come from the large covered vat in that ghoulish corner of crawling black shadows.

Wings of Death

By ***RALPH MILNE FARLEY***

She dumped in the kerosene . . .

JACKSON AMES, bronzed and broad-shouldered, his narrow hips encased in black shorts, lolled in the sun at the rim of the private swimming pool of his Massachusetts seacoast estate. Beside him sat his equally bronzed and almost equally unclad young wife, her wavy brown hair sparkling in the summer sun.

I had been sent out by the Boston *Post,* to get the story of the recent Salem shipping merger, in which Ames's trading fleet had played a considerable part. A few minutes had sufficed to cover the salient facts, and I was about to leave, when Mrs. Ames spoke up.

"Jack, why not give Mr. Farley a *real*

Heading by MARGARET BRUNDAGE

There are islands in the South Pacific not charted on any map. And there are flies as big as wasps . . . bigger . . . sacred flies—damnable *flies!*

story, instead of these dry statistics? Why not tell him about the sacred flies of Malea?"

"Sacred flies!" I exclaimed, sitting down abruptly. "Who or what is Malea? And *what* are sacred flies?"

" 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy,' " Ames quoted, adding, "and there are islands in the South Pacific not charted on any map."

"Go on," I encouraged.

Ames continued, "My dad never would reveal the exact location of the Island of Malea—a trade secret of his. It's near the Marquesas; that's definite enough. Dad took me down there once as a kid of twelve—and I've been there once since." Ames drew a breath. "Those flies! Flies big as wasps! Bigger! Flies everywhere! That's what impressed me first about Malea, even as a kid. Impresses me still, for those damnable flies—! Sacred flies!"

"But why *sacred?*"

"Because the natives worshipped them. Their wings were shaped like swallow's wings, and on their backs were two white blotches resembling a skull and cross-bones. Why not! The well-wnown death's-head moth is very similarly marked. These flies were tabu; to hurt one of them meant death at the hands of the priesthood. They were called 'nono.' " Ames laughed grimly. "What name could be more appropriate for a creature that was tabu! And even more dreadful was the source of these flies, the 'Pool of Life.' "

Ames shuddered, and his bronzed face lost some of its color as he described the Pool to me. His pretty young wife smiled sympathetically, and patted his sinewy arm with her dainty hand.

FAR back in the mountains in the center of the island, Ames explained, lay the holy "Pool of Life." According to the Malean religion, all living things sprang from this Pool; and, if this Pool should ever die, life on earth would cease.

Only adult males and pregnant women ever made pilgrimage to the holy Pool, and only the priests were ever permitted to mention it. Yet Jackson Ames at the age of twelve had with boyish curiosity discussed the Pool with Prince Tohu, ten-year-old son of Chief Koo. The two boys had also sneaked out into the mountains to see the forbidden spot.

The Pool was a rock crater about thirty feet in diameter, filled with a sluggish pearly liquid, which heaved and throbbed and pulsated as though it were alive. And such a stench! A carrion reek of rotten fetidness!

"It ought to be called the Pool of Death, rather than the Pool of Life," little Prince Tohu gasped, as the two boys first gazed upon it.

Over it and around it swarmed hundreds of the death's-head flies, mostly in pairs circling each other, some alighting for an instant on the heaving surface of the slimy contents of the Pool. Occasionally a third fly would join a circling pair, and would battle one member of it to the death; then the two survivors would resume their circling.

One of the flies settled on young Jack's arm—and bit. Ouch! Jack slapped; then brushed off the crushed fly.

Tohu's jaw dropped, and his eyes widened with horror. He recoiled from his friend, and then glanced aloft for the expected bolt from Heaven.

But nothing happened. Even Jack Ames breathed more easily.

Tohu furtively scanned the surrounding rocks for onlookers. Then, emboldened, he too slapped and killed a holy fly. He cringed expectantly. But again nothing happened. Taking Ames's right hand in his, and placing his left hand on Ames's shoulder, he solemnly said, with proud chest and gleaming eye, "Let this be our

secret, Jack. We each have killed a god. Now I know that the religion of the nonos is a lie. Some day I shall free my father's people from old skull-face! Promise to help me."

"I promise."

Old skull-face was the name that the natives secretly called the much-hated Chief Priest Nonomaka, for his yellow withered skin was drawn tight over his skull. A fitting priest for the religion of the death's-head flies!

The two boys sneaked back from the Pool of Life to the native village unobserved, half proud, half frightened, bound by the indissoluble ties of mutual guilt. And from then on they behaved with an increased cockiness in the presence of the native priests. Skull-faced old Nonomaka devoted considerable narrow-eyed attention to the two brats, his yellow chin cupped in his clawlike talons.

IT WAS eleven years before Jack Ames returned to Malea. Much as he had pled with his father, school and college had been considered more important than trips to the South Seas. Little Jack had become big Jack, a brawny broad-shouldered athlete, quarterback on the Harvard varsity and Ivy League champion at throwing the javelin.

Of course, Jack heard from Tohu in the interim. There were snapshots going back and forth every trip Jack's father made, so that Jack and his boyhood pal kept track of each other's development. Prince Tohu had become a Marquesan counterpart of Jackson Ames—an expert runner, diver, swimmer, and spearer of fish. If dressed in conventional clothes, he could have passed as an American.

One of the pictures brought back by Mr. Ames shortly before Jackson's graduation was a family group showing grizzled Chief Koo, his fat old wife, stalwart Prince Tohu, a number of younger sons, and one beautiful girl, slim and yet delicately rounded, naked to the waist, flowers entwined in her wavy hair, and wearing a grass skirt and grass anklets.

"Tohu's wife?" Jack asked, studying the picture intently.

His father laughed and shook his head. "Remember that five-year-old girl-brat, who tagged around after old lady Koo the year you were at Malea? Well, this is what she grew up into. It's Tohu's sister Tomara. Quite a girl, eh?"

Jackson Ames got out a magnifying glass and tried to get a close-up of the native girl, but somehow the picture eluded him.

Too small, when not enlarged; and, when enlarged, too indistinct.

Mr. Ames died shortly after his son's graduation, and the son's first act after taking over the management of the Ames fleet, was to rummage through his father's maps until he found the secret Isle of Malea, and then guide one of the trimmest of his cargo ships, the *Mary B,* to that island.

It was like a home-coming. The intervening years slipped away, as he and Tohu embraced each other. Ames found himself again talking the native language without difficulty.

Chief Koo, though white-haired and tottering, was still keen-eyed and adored by his people as of old. Even the skull-faced priest Nonomaka, lurking in the background, sinister and scowling, helped to renew the past.

And then the girl of the much-thumbed snapshot stepped forward—Tomara, slim and golden-bronze, with wavy brown hair and frank honey-colored eyes.

"Jack, this is my sister," was Tohu's simple unaffected introduction.

Tomara glanced sidewise up. Ames' eager eyes devoured her perfect figure, frankly unadorned except for grass skirt and anklets. His pulses raced.

(I glanced over embarrassedly at my host's typically Bostonian wife, to see how she was taking this part of the narrative, but her expression was inscrutable. "What do you think of the South Sea Islands, Mrs. Ames?" I asked. Her eyes crinkled with amusement. "They are very romantic; is it not so? Jack and I are planning a cruise there this fall." I shook my head bewildered. Ames continued his story.)

SOME of the crew of the *Mary B* had been to Malea before, but not so Manuel Costa, the roly poly little Cape Cod Portygee who captained the ship. At the banquet given by the Maleans in honor of the New Englanders the first evening after their arrival, when the savory odor of roast pig and the sour fumes of baked poi had brought down swarms of deaths-head flies upon food and feaster alike, Captain Costa, irritated by a stinging nip on the back of his neck, and momentarily forgetful of constant coaching by Jackson Ames, instinctively swatted and crushed one of the sacred nonos!

A flash of torch-illumined glee flickered across the parchment face of the High Priest, who had been squatting nearby. Masking his joy with an expression of fanatical hate, he leaped to his feet. "Tabu!" he yelled.

A hush fell on native and American alike. All eyes followed the skinny finger of Nonomaka, leveled accusingly at the luckless Captain Costa. Costa lumbered to his feet, staring around him in bewilderment at the ring of hostile glances which encircled him; and, as the significance of the unanimous accusation dawned upon him, he reached for his hip.

But Jackson Ames had taken the precaution to bring his men ashore unarmed.

"Seize the Farani!" boomed the cracked voice of the ancient priest.

The crew of the *Mary B* gathered around their captain, who now shouted defiantly, "It was only a fly. If it had been a god, *I* would have died, not *it*." He nervously fingered the gold crucifix which hung from a string around his neck.

"What does the Farani say?" asked Nonomaka.

One of the natives translated. An uneasy murmur arose from the crowd.

"The dead god will be reborn," Nonomaka declaimed, "and will act through us, his worshipers, to wreak vengeance on the Farani."

The natives snatched up coconut-wood spears and clubs of well-oiled ironwood, and backed away from the overturned kava-leaf plates of food. The serving girls scattered to their huts in the darkness like a covey of night-startled quail—all except Tomara, who, although poised for flight, turned anxious eyes toward Jackson Ames.

Chief Koo began to remonstrate, but was silenced by Nonomaka, who, drawing himself to his full height, majestically announced, "This affair concerns religion, O Chief."

The candlenuts guttered, and the scented smoke of sandalwood spiraled to the starlit sky.

Then Prince Tohu strode amid the spilled food into the space between the two groups, his rippling muscles gleaming in the torchlight. "Friend Jack," he shouted, "come forth!"

Ames too stepped forward. "We both are killers," he pointedly replied in the native tongue.

Although the meaning was lost on all except the two who had stood as boys in the forbidden vale of the Pool of Life, the High Priest cringed at the weight of hidden meaning which the words carried.

"I defend the religion of my people," Tohu asserted. "What have you to offer in expiation?"

Ames thought fast. There flashed through his mind the scene eleven years ago at the brink of the Pool, when the

native boy of ten had said, "We have each killed a god. Now I know that the religion of the nonos is a lie. Some day I shall free my father's people from old skull-face! Promise to help me." And the American boy had replied, "I promise."

So now, with sudden resolution, Ames announced, "I will surrender the guilty man to be thrown to feed the Pool of Life."

Priest Nonomaka laughed a cackling laugh. "Why should we be satisfied with that?" he sneered. "We have the power to take *all* the impious Farani."

"The power, but not the right, O Priest," Tohu boldly asserted. "Is it not the law of our religion that only the guilty need suffer for their guilt?"

A grumbling assent arose from the Malean warriors. They respected and feared their religion, but they hated its priesthood.

Several of the crew, sensing that Tohu was arguing on their side, cried, "Atta-boy!"

Ames silenced them with a quick gesture; then addressed Priest Nonomaka, "I repeat. Will you be satisfied with the surrender of Captain Costa?"

Nonomaka glanced around the torchlit scowling faces of his tribesmen, before replying, "Your men are now unarmed and at our mercy. But, if I let you go, you will return and either rescue or avenge him. With tree-guns, you will pour fire and iron balls into our peaceful village."

"I too will stay behind, as a hostage for the good behavior of my men," Ames declared.

A crafty light flickered in the eyes of the High Priest. "Accepted," he grunted.

Ames repeated the arrangement in English to the crew.

"What!" Captain Costa exclaimed, his face suffused, his dark eyes snapping. "Throw me to the dogs, to save your own neck?"

Ames bit his lip. He dared not even mention his rescue plan. Some of the natives might understand enough English to catch on. He would have to trust to Costa reading between the lines.

"Keep up the show of indignation, Captain. Remember that I too am risking my own neck as well as yours. Remember also the duty of a sea-captain to save his ship at any cost to himself."

Costa nodded imperceptibly, then heaped a torrent of Portuguese swear-words upon Ames.

Ames smiled approvingly. "Seize him, men!" he barked.

Frowning with perplexity, two husky seamen stepped up, pinioned Costa's arms to his side, marched him forward, and delivered him into the hands of two natives designated by the High Priest.

The look of anxious concern on Tomara's eyes turned to one of contempt. "A Malean would have died to defend his Captain!" she exclaimed. Holding her head high, she faded into the surrounding darkness.

Ames shrugged his broad shoulders. The girl might think that he was yielding spinelessly, instead of playing the man; but the situation called for subtlety rather than force.

"And now, Mate Bettencourt," he commanded, "return to the *Mary B.* Send ashore a boat-load of supplies for me. And then sail away and never return." Ames' voice broke. Tears glittered in his eyes in the torchlight. Stepping over to the perplexed First Mate, he clasped his hand, then embraced him, whispering hurriedly in his ear, "Include in my supplies all the kerosene you can spare. Come back in a month. I have a plan." Then breaking away, he wailed, "Good-by! Good-by, dear friend!"

Bettencourt, his eyes twinkling, let out an answering pretended wail, and withdrew his men.

The gathering now broke up. Captain Costa was dragged away. Most of the natives remained under arms on the beach, to guard against a surprise attack. Tohu led Ames to a vacant hut, a new and clean hut as though prepared for his occupancy. Ames remarked on this.

Fortunately for you, Jack," Tohu explained, "the young couple who owned this house were both recently sacrificed to the Pool of Life, just after they finished building it."

Ames shuddered, and glanced suspiciously around in the flickering shadows cast by Tohu's torch. "I hope this won't prove a bad omen for me."

Tohu grinned, then sobered. "I take it that you have some plan to rescue Captain Costa. Old Nonomaka also appears to suspect the same. You are brave but foolish, Jack."

"I wish that your sister thought so. She considers me a coward.—Tohu, do you remember the time when you and I visited the Pool of Life together, and each of us killed one of the holy flies, and we swore to each other that some day we would destroy the Pool of Life itself? Well, I have a plan to do that, rather than to rescue Captain Costa. If I can destroy the Pool, there will be no need then to rescue the captain; he will automatically go free."

"You are even more rash than I had thought. What is your plan?"

"I dare not tell even you, for we might be overheard. By the way, how much time have I? When does Nonomaka plan to kill the captain?"

"Not until after the Mating Feast, which takes all next week."

The Mating Feast! The mating dance of the virgins, with brutal fights to the death whenever more than one young warrior aspired to wed the same maiden. Ames' mind flashed back to one of these orgies which he had seen as a boy, but had then only half understood.

Now, however, he was more concerned with saving his captain than with the quaint marriage ceremonies of the Maleans. "Good!" he exclaimed. "That gives me a few days' time. Meanwhile please try to get Tomara to believe that I am not a coward."

That evening Ames, standing on the beach amid his supplies and bedding, just brought ashore, saw the lights of the *Mary B* become fainter and fainter until they vanished into the night.

He spent the next two or three days arranging his quarters. Everywhere he went he was trailed by two members of the priesthood who watched his every move. Because of this surveillance, the natives looked askance at him, fearing the enmity of the priests. Tohu alone consorted with him openly, with many resulting black looks from old Nonomaka, the High Priest. Ames was not permitted to see Captain Costa, but Tohu reported that the captain was being well taken care of and well fed —stuffed with the best of viands, in fact. Ames' plans were all laid, and he bided his time.

Repeatedly he tried to get a chance to talk with Tomara, but she contemptuously avoided him. Even her brother was unable to intercede for his friend.

The week of the Mating Feast opened with an evening banquet on the beach. When the villagers had all eaten their fill of wild pig and poi, and the rubbish had been cleared away, a large circle was formed in the sweet-scented purple twilight. As the darkness deepened, candlenuts and torches were lighted, casting eerie flickering shadows on the scene.

At one side of the circle a native orchestra of three pitches of drums began to play. First there was only the thump-thump-thump of the deep-voiced drums, and to their rhythmic cadence Nonomaka and his priests entered the enclosure in single file, clothed in black feathered

capes, and helmets like the heads of flies. The middle-range drums now joined the chorus, swelling and diminishing, swelling and diminishing, with a rippling undulance which brought to Ames' mind the heaving surface of the pearly slime in the Pool of Life, as he had seen it as a child. The high-pitched drums were stroked with a swishing sound like the wings of the circling flies, mating above the filthy Pool, which had given them birth. And to this triple chorus of the drums, the fly-like priests began zigzagging with rapid mincing steps, to and fro, and round and round, in excellent imitation of the insects which they revered.

Gradually, one by one, young women left the circle and joined the line of the hopping priests. Tohu, squatting beside Ames at the edge of the circle, explained: "Any unmarried girl who is old enough to mate, can take part in the dance."

As he spoke, Tohu's eyes ran uneasily along the line of dancers and around the circle. He stiffened suddenly. A slim girl almost as delicately rounded as Tomara, had stepped into the arena.

THE priests now withdrew from the dance and stood behind the drum orchestra. This was a signal for each of the girls to approach the rim, grasp the hand of a young man, and drag him into the center. Tohu stiffened again; he had not been chosen.

A grand-right-and-left now took place. From time to time, some man, as he seized the hand of a girl, would whirl her out into the center instead of passing her on to the next man in line. Then the two would drop hands and circle each other, alternately approaching and backing away slightly, fluttering like the pairs of flies at the Pool of Life.

A man broke from the chain of the grand-right-and-left and rushed up to one of these fluttering couples. The girl fell back, and the two men faced each other. This was no mere part of the ritual; hatred to the death was in each man's eyes, as they flew at each other's throats. A minute later one of them was stretched motionless upon the sands. Two priests stepped in and carted away his inert form. The victor and his prize took up the dance again.

Tomara too was in the dance. As Ames noticed her there, she left the weaving double line with one of the men—a handsome fellow, Ames was forced to admit.

Ames clenched his fists. But what could he do about it? If he had been in the dance, he could challenge the man; but he was not.

A huge brute, over six feet in height, with a barrel chest and Herculean shoulders, swaggered from the weaving line, grabbed one of the arms of Tomara's partner, and swung him around. Tomara shrieked, clasped her hands together on her bare breast, and backed away.

Her former partner was no match for the burly brute, but put up a game fight, repeatedly charging in; until finally, staggering and exhausted, he was laid flat by a mere tap administered by his guffawing opponent. Ames itched to rescue Tomara from this beast.

The beautiful girl whom Tohu had been watching, was now whisked out of line and began to dance with one of the men. With a roar, Tohu leaped up and into the ring. The man scarce had time to sense his coming, before Tohu's fist felled him with one well-placed blow to the jaw.

Ames rose and stared after his friend with admiration. Suddenly he realized what this occurrence signified—that a man did not have to be a participant in order to challenge a mating; bystanders could get into the game. So he too charged into the torchlit arena.

Tomara saw him coming, and broke away from her partner. Her amber eyes lit up as they fastened upon Ames, and

her flower-decked head nodded slightly in encouragement. The huge native planted his feet squarely apart and lunged at the oncoming Ames with one hamlike hand.

Ames jerked his head almost imperceptibly to the right, the fist shot over his left shoulder, and the native pitched forward on top of him. Into the midst of this toppling tower of flesh Ames drove his fist with every ounce of his strength behind it.

THE native doubled up, clutched his belly with both hands, and grunted and wheezed in agony, his jaw invitingly within convenient reach.

Ames swung at it. His knuckles crunched against the man's jaw. But the blow jarred Ames more than his opponent, who, with the groaning return of his wind, wrapped his two arms around Ames.

"Jack! Jack! Look out!" cried Tomara.

So she cared! With a surge of fierce joy, Ames pulled with all his strength against the encircling arms of the giant native, then suddenly trod on both of the man's feet and thrust forward. The native, thrown off balance, tried to step backward, but his feet were pinned. He fell, and falling let go of Ames to grope for an easier landing.

This was Ames' opportunity. He planted his left hand on the man's shoulder, forced himself back, and drove his right fist into the man's soft stomach. Then, as they crashed together to the ground, Ames sprang clear with catlike agility.

The giant groaned, blinked, shook his huge head, and strove to rise. Ames braced his feet, clenched his gory fists, and waited. The man's unprotected solar plexus invited a final coup de grace while the man was still down. All is fair in love and war, and this was both. But Ames' American sporting sense triumphed—tinged, however, with his American sense of humor.

With a bellow of well-simulated rage, Ames made as if to jump with both feet upon the man's middle. The big bully shrieked with fear and rolled away.

Two priests entered the arena and dragged out the vanquished. Tomara, her amber eyes glowing, her slender hands clasped ecstatically at her slim throat, floated forward. And in another instant Ames found himself instinctively circling her in the mating dance of the black flies.

All eyes were upon him in surprise and awe, due apparently more to amazement at his prowess than at the unusual sight of a stranger taking part in a native ritual.

"Halt!" commanded the cracked voice of the High Priest. The rhythmic drumbeat stopped. The puzzled dancers ceased their circling. "This Farani is not one of us. He cannot mate with a Malean."

As the import of these words clicked in Ames' brain, his jaw dropped, his eyes widened, and he fell back a pace from his partner. Mate with a Malean? He had had no thought of mating with a Malean. He had merely acted instinctively, to save his friend's sister from an unwanted match with that uncouth monstrosity. He had never considered what were his own sentiments toward Tomara. Anyway he wouldn't let her down in public. And no native priest was going to tell Jackson Ames of Salem what he could or could not do. His cool blue eyes narrowed, and he drew himself erect.

"Why can't I mate as I choose?" he challenged. "You didn't interfere, O Nonomaka, when I stepped into the circle, for you thought that the man-mountain was going to make mince-meat of me. Now that I have won, it is too late for you to object! He threw one arm around Tomara's soft shoulders, and drew her to him.

Tohu added, "He is right, O Priest. Remember the case of the girl too young, who entered the circle without timely protest. Her marriage took place. The same ruling should apply now."

Old Koo stood up from where he

squatted with his family. "Although the dance is a rite of the holy nonos," he declared, "yet it is for the Chief to decide who may marry."

"And you wish this Farani to mate with your daughter?" Incredulous scorn vibrated in Nonomaka's aged voice.

"I do," Chief Koo replied with cold incisive dignity.

Nonomaka shrugged, but his sunken eyes were deep pools of hate. "Let the dance proceed."

Once more the drums took up their musical portrayal of the swirling of the pairs of flies above the heaving surface of the Pool of Life. Once more the pairs of dancers copied the mating flight of their gods.

One by one the couples left the dance and disappeared into the darkness beyond the circle. Finally Tomara too reached forward, took Ames' muscular paw in her tiny hand, gave it a squeeze and drew close to him, gazing up at him with complete trust and adoration. "Come, my beloved," she breathed, as she led him to the edge of the circle, which parted to let them pass, and then out into the starlit darkness beyond.

As they walked along, Tomara nestled softly against him. "And now what," Ames wondered, vaguely uneasy. "Ahem! Tomara, are we—? I mean—. That is to say—. Well, you know, I don't fully understand all of the customs of your people."

She laughed a silvery little laugh, and her hand tightened on his. "If you were one of my people, we would rub noses. But," now *she* hesitated, "as you are an American, I think that you might kiss me."

Ames swung her around and seized her in his arms. She lifted her face to his, as she pressed softly against him. Her warm red lips were parted, and her eyes were moist. And thus, to the cadence of the throbbing drums behind them, Jackson Ames kissed his bride.

(This part of Ames' story gave me the fidgets. What was his present wife thinking of all this time, as he so glibly recounted his love affair with this native beauty? But Mrs. Ames' head was turned away, and she was gazing far off across the lawns to the distant sea. So I could not catch her expression. Probably she had the conventional tolerance of amorous cruising adventures, that the wives of New England seafarers have had to cultivate for many generations. Jackson Ames continued his story, unabashed.)

AT LAST Ames gently released the native girl. She laughed another silvery tinkling laugh. Then sighed. "A week of ceremonies we must go through before I am truly yours, Jack. But let us now sit on the beach together—close together—and talk. We have so many things to say to each other. I must tell you how brave and strong you are. And you must tell me that I am beautiful and sweet."

"Words cannot describe you!" Ames breathed, as he drew her down beside him on the sand.

A glow appeared at the rim of the eastern skies, and the moon began to rise from the rippling sea. Ames put his arm around Tomara's bare waist, and she nestled her fragrant head on his shoulder.

"How could I have thought you a coward!" she said. "And yet you did give up your captain to death, without a fight."

"To have fought would have meant death not only for Captain Costa, but for all my other men. And I have a plan, not only to save him, but also to free your people from Priest Nonomaka.—Tomara, do you believe the religion of the flies?"

"Why, yes! Of course!—And yet—. My brother Tohu has intimated that maybe—perhaps—. Jack beloved, I will believe whatever you believe. Are those flies gods?"

"They are not! They are nothing but

flies! You saw Captain Costa kill one of them, and the heavens did not fall. The Pool of Life is merely a huge pail of swill, writhing with the maggots which these nasty creatures breed."

Tomara's eyes went wide with horror in the moonlight. For a moment Ames believed that this was horror at that awful Pool. But, as the girl cringed away from him, he realized that she was bitterly jolted by his impiety.

"No! It cannot be!" she cried in a frightened little voice.

"Tomara, dear, a moment ago you said that you would believe whatever I believe. Have you ever—but of course you haven't, for you are still pure. Isn't it significant, dear, that sweet young girls like you are never permitted to see that awful Pool. Well, *I* have seen it!"

"What!"

"Yes, and I still live. I saw the Pool as a boy, eleven years ago." He described the scene in detail, but carefully omitted to implicate her brother, Tohu. "No other life than those flies comes from there. Nothing so beautiful and sweet as you could have its origin in such filth. And where do we Farani come from, do you think? We have no Pools of Life on *our* islands."

Tomara shuddered. "I want to believe you, Jack, to worship your gods; but it is hard—I am afraid."

His gods. He had not thought of them. He had been pitting his own puny power against this native religion. The faith of his Puritan ancestors had pretty much petered out, down through the generations. A tingle swept through his skin, his eyes narrowed, and his firm jaw tightened. "God give me the strength," he whispered. Then to Tomara, "I want you more than I have ever wanted anything in all my life. But I want you to be *all* my own."

She drew close to him again. "I *am* yours, *all* yours," she breathed.

But Ames resolutely shook his head. "Not unless you are willing to help me save you and your people from Nonomaka and his priests. Will you?"

She hesitated. Out of the moonlit night droned one of the swallow-like deaths-head flies, and alighted on Ames' arm.

"Behold your god," he said gently, almost reverently.

On sudden impulse, Tomara reached over and slapped the nono. It dropped, squashed and lifeless, to the sand. Tomara recoiled with horror at her act.

But Ames exulted, "Now you are one of us, my dear. Eleven years ago I too killed a nono, and I am still alive. There is no punishment for the death of a nono, unless the High Priest learns of it. And then it is he, a mere human man, who exacts the penalty, not his gods."

"Jack," said Tomara in a hushed and subdued voice, "I believe you. I will help you save my people. And now, my beloved, take me in your arms."

GENTLY he released her. "Love must wait, for we have work to do."

She sighed. "What is your plan, Jack?"

"When do the priests next feed the Pool of Life?"

"Tomorrow is a fast day. Tomorrow everyone in the village, instead of putting merely the leave-overs of his food into the holy bamboo pails beside his hut, must fill them to the brim with fresh-cooked food, and eat nothing himself. A special expedition will then take this offering to the Pool on the following day."

"Well, Tomara," Ames announced, "after everyone else is asleep tonight, you and I are going to spike the drink of the gods. A little kerosene in the bottom of every swill-pail will put an end forever to the heaving pulsation of the Pool of Life."

"You would kill the Pool?"

"Yes."

"And will not all life on earth then cease?"

"Nonsense! Only the Pool will die. And when your people see that the Pool is dead and that they still live, they will turn on Nonomaka and his gang, and kill them too."

"That would be very nice. But I am afraid, much afraid."

The talk switched to lighter subjects. But Tomara remained depressed and silent, and neither tenderness nor ardent love could bring her out of her mood. Though the night was warm, she shivered from time to time.

When the lights of the dance were finally extinguished, and the last native had retired, Tomara followed Ames as in a trance, while he opened tin after tin of his stock of coal-oil, and poured a few cupsfull into every bamboo garbage-pail in the village.

As the eastern sky began to pinken with the morning sun, Ames kissed Tomara a tender good-by at her father's hut. For a moment she clung to him desperately—then dashed into the hut. Ames returned to his own hut with exalted stride.

After a brief nap, he arose again, dumped out what should have been his breakfast, as an offering to the gods, and went in search of Tohu.

The Prince was dumping out his own uneaten breakfast as Ames approached. "Welcome, brother," Tohu greeted him. "You won Tomara fairly and honorably last night. We shall be glad to have you join our tribe."

"Congratulations to you too, on getting *your* girl. But look here, Tohu, the time has come to challenge Nonomaka."

"Can't you wait until you're safely married to my sister?"

"No. For then it would be too late to save Captain Costa. Tomara and I have talked it over, and she has agreed."

"But why challenge old skull-face? Why not first try to destroy the Pool. Then, if you fail, and are not caught at the attempt, your life will not be forfeit."

"I must take the chance, for it is only by announcing my plans in advance, that their success can discredit old Nonomaka. Otherwise he might save his face by some glib explanation."

Tohu shrugged his broad shoulders. "What can I do to help?"

"Gather the whole tribe together today, for an important announcement."

"Unnecessary. This afternoon's ritual consists in speeches by the newly chosen bridegrooms."

"Then get me the gold cross which hangs around the neck of Captain Costa. You will have to take it by force, as he would not part with it willingly."

That afternoon, when it came Ames' turn to speak, he did not praise his bride as the others had done. Instead he arose with quiet dignity, and said in kindly tones, "Fellow Maleans—for now I am one of you, by virtue of last night's ritual—I come from another land, with other customs and another religion. Ought Tomara to adopt my religion? Or ought I to adopt hers? I dare put mine to the test, to determine this question." He wheeled suddenly, and confronted the scowling High Priest then continued still suavely, but with a new incisive note in his voice, "I am sure, Nonomaka, that you have the same confidence in your religion that I have in mine."

Embarrassed and taken by surprise, Nonomaka grunted, "Certainly, Farani."

Ames held up the little gold crucifix. "This is the totem of my God, who is a god of kindness. I propose that Nonomaka pray to his Pool of Life, while I burn incense before this cross. The stronger of the two will destroy the other."

"Sacrilege!" shrieked the High Priest. "He has mentioned that which is too holy to mention. Seize him, men!"

But Prince Tohu held up his hand. "Just a minute, Nonomaka. I have more confidence in our religion than you seem to have. Let the Farani try—and fail! Then will our holy nonos be vindicated, and then can the Farani be destroyed for his impiety."

A murmur of approval swept the throng.

But Nonomaka shook his skull-like head. "Seize him!" he shrieked.

"Are you afraid to put your religion to the test?" Ames asked contemptuously.

"No," the priest replied, more calmly now. "Not afraid. Merely cautious. The test can proceed, but it must be a *fair* test. No more poisoning of the sacred food."

"What!" Ames gasped.

Nonomaka grinned a toothless grin of triumph. "Oh, I knew your plans, killer of flies. The bamboo pails have all been emptied and scoured. You and your god will be prisoners, well-guarded in your hut until the test is over. I have no fear of the outcome."

He waved his withered yellow hand disdainfully. Two spearmen seized the astonished Ames and dragged him away to his hut.

Had Tomara told? Nonomaka's allusion to "killer of flies" pointed to this conclusion.

Now Ames' kerosene was all gone. How could he hope to win now, even if he could escape the guards?

Nevertheless he must not let these natives sense his despair. So he set the little gold crucifix up in the ground at the door of the hut where all passers-by could see, and burned candle-nuts and sandalwood before it. Perhaps if he prayed, help would come.

The afternoon passed. Evening fell. No help. Not even any bright ideas.

A throng of curious natives gathered around the doorway to watch the incantations of this medicine-man of the Farani. Some of the bolder of them even jested at him. The hulking brute, with whom Ames had fought for Tomara, came and boasted that soon Tomara would be his.

Ames, to keep his temper in check, withdrew to the darkness of the rear of the hut.

A voice through the wall whispered, "Jack, it is I, Tomara. Is there nothing we can do?"

Ames thrilled. She was not faithless. How could he ever have mistrusted her! "If I had some more kerosene—," he began.

"There is one tin more. We did not use it all. I remember seeing it among your store of food."

"Fine! Do you know the way to the Pool of Life?"

The cracked voice of Nonomaka at the door interrupted them. "Farani, come forth."

Ames approached the door.

The High Priest continued, "Pick up your god, and follow me."

Ames began to protest, but two spearmen seized him.

"Leave your god then," Nonomaka sneered. "Let your god follow and free you, if he is so all-powerful."

THE spearmen dragged Ames toward the prison-hut which housed Manuel Costa.

At its door they were met by Prince Tohu. Considerable argument ensued, with the result that Ames was finally permitted to return to his own hut, with his ankles shackled together, and on condition that Tohu vouch that Ames would not attempt to escape.

Ames relighted the candle-nuts and incense, and lay down to wait for Tomara. But she did not return. He hunted thoroughly among the canned goods for the tin of kerosene which she had said was still there, but it was not. Finally late at night he fell asleep.

Morning dawned. Prince Tohu came.

World's Greatest Collection of Strange & Secret Photographs

NOW you can travel 'round the world with the most daring adventurers. You can see with your own eyes the weirdest peoples on earth. You witness the strangest customs of the red, white, brown, black and yellow races. You attend their startling rites, their mysterious practices. They are all assembled for you in these five great volumes of The SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND.

600 LARGE PAGES

Here is the world's Greatest Collection of Strange and Secret Photographs. Here are Exotic Photos from Europe, Primitive Photos from Africa, Torture Photos from Asia, Female Photos from Oceania and America, and hundreds of others. There are almost **600 LARGE PAGES of Strange & Secret Photographs,** each page 57 square inches in size.

1,000 PHOTOS

You see actual courtship practiced in every quarter of the world. You see magic and mystery in queer lands where the foot of a white man has rarely trod. You see Oriental modes of marriage and female slavery in China, Japan, India, etc. Through the intimacy of the cameras you witness the exotic habits of every continent and the strangest customs of life and love in America, Europe, etc. You are bewildered by these large pages of **ONE THOUSAND PHOTOGRAPHS,** including 130 full-page photos, and thrilled by the hundreds of short stories that describe them.

Contents of 5-Volume Set
VOLUME 1
The Secret Album of Africa
VOLUME 2
The Secret Album of Europe
VOLUME 3
The Secret Album of Asia
VOLUME 4
The Secret Album of America
VOLUME 5
The Secret Album of Oceania

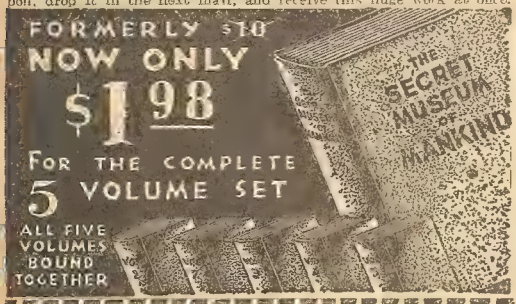
5 PICTURE-PACKED VOLUMES

SPECIMEN PHOTOS
Dress & Undress 'Round the World
Various Secret Societies
Civilized Love vs. Savage
Strange Crimes, Criminals
Omens, Totems & Taboos
Mysterious Customs
1,000 STRANGE & SECRET PHOTOS

THE SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND consists of five picture-packed volumes (solidly bound together for convenient reading). Dip into any one of these volumes, and as you turn its pages, you find it difficult to tear yourself away. Here, in story and unusual photo, is the WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF STRANGE AND SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS, containing everything from Female Beauty 'Round the World to the most Mysterious Cults and Customs. These hundreds and hundreds of large pages will give you days and nights of thrilling instruction.

SEND NO MONEY

Simply sign & mail the coupon. Remember, each of the 5 Volumes is 9¼ inches high, and, opened, over a foot wide! Remember also that this 5-Volume Set formerly sold for $10. And it is bound in expensive "life-time" cloth. Don't put this off. Fill out the coupon, drop it in the next mail, and receive this huge work at once.



METRO PUBLICATIONS, 50 West 17th St., Dept. 1908, New York
Send me "The Secret Museum of Mankind" (5 great volumes bound together). I will pay postman $1.98, plus postage on arrival. If not delighted, I will return book in 5 days for full refund of $1.98.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

☐ CHECK HERE if you are enclosing $1.98, thus saving mailing costs. Same Money-Back Guarantee.
Canadian Orders—$2.50 in Advance.

Ames sent his friend to look for Tomara, but the girl was nowhere to be found. The drums beat. Bearers gathered up the containers of food. The expedition started for the mountains. No one remained in the village except women and children and a few guards. Still no sign of Tomara. And even if she were to come, what good would it do now? For there was no kerosene!

THE morning wore on. The guards dozed in the sun at the front of the hut. Ames heard a scratching at the rear wall. A small section fell away, and Tomara's bronzed face and wavy brown hair appeared in the opening. Her finger pressed to her lips, then beckoned. Ames hitched himself over to her, as well as his hobbled ankles would permit.

The girl whispered, "While Nonomaka was dragging you away last evening, I broke in here and took the kerosene. Early this morning before daylight I set out on the mountain trail, and followed it to the Pool, where I dumped in the kerosene. Then I hid and watched until the procession of food-bearers arrived. The Pool was quiet and dead; it heaved no more. My brother and the warriors cried, 'Jack Ames has won! Jack Ames has won!' Nonomaka and his priests turned and fled. Our men will kill them, when they catch them."

"Good girl!" Ames exclaimed.

"And here is a knife to free yourself with," Tomara added, handing it through the hole.

Ames had scarcely loosed his bonds, when Nonomaka appeared in the doorway. The priest was panting and his parchment face was flushed, but he was making a supreme effort to appear calm and unhurried.

"Well, Ames, the sacred flies have won," he asserted. "Come forth to die."

"You lie!" Ames shouted, springing to his feet. "See, I am free! The Pool of Life is dead!"

Tomara crawled through the hole, rushed to the front of the hut, and stood with flashing eyes beside her lover. "Yes,"

she cried, "The Pool of Life is dead. I saw it die."

With Nonomaka were a few of his priests. The rest were on the beach, hastily launching canoes. The two guards stood shifting their feet uncertainly.

As Ames and Tomara confronted Nonomaka, a spear cast by one of the lesser priests hurtled past Ames' head. Tomara shrieked. Ames snatched a spear from one of the guards, and threw it with unerring accuracy, impaling the man who had attacked him.

"Death to the Farani!" shrilled Nonomaka. A dozen spears were raised.

From behind Ames came Tomara's voice, "I'm not hurt, Jack. I was merely frightened." She put a spear into his hand.

Poising it expertly, Ames shouted, "Lower your weapons. I am the best javelin-thrower in all the land of the Farani."

The priests could well believe him, for they had seen their fellow die. Down came their spears.

"Old skull-face," Ames hissed, his eyes narrow slits, "you have lost, and you know it. Your filthy Pool is dead. But you hoped to kill me in revenge, before fleeing from the well-deserved wrath of the Maleans. Go in peace and go quickly. For my God forgives his enemies."

One look of uncomprehending amazement. Then Nonomaka fled precipitately to the beach, and out to sea.

"Are you all right?" Ames anxiously asked, turning to Tomara.

"All right and all yours, my beloved," she replied, nestling against him. Then suddenly tensing, "But you should have held the old fellow here for my people to kill, as he would have killed you."

The shouts of the approaching tribesmen could be heard coming down the mountain trail.

"The priests must have taken the same short cut I did," Tomara explained.

Tohu reached them a hundred yards

ELECTRICITY Learn at Home

BIG WAR WORK FIELD—BIG FUTURE!

For Beginner or Old Timer—a simple, practical training and reference set. See it now.

7 Day FREE TRIAL

Costs You Nothing to Examine this 3-Vol. Set of COYNE ELECTRICAL BOOKS!

SEEING is believing! That's why I want you to look over this big, new, amazing 3-volume Reference Set on Practical Electricity! Prepared by experts—packed with 43 years of experience—yet written in plain, understandable language that helps YOU earn more money!

FOR THE "BEGINNER" OR "OLD TIMER"

Covers everything electrical, from simple wiring to D.C. and A.C., Armature Winding, Electronics, Power Plant Work. Answers all your electrical problems quickly, clearly, completely.

USED BY HUNDREDS IN THEIR DAILY WORK

Electricians, maintenance men, air cadets, radio men, turn to this great set for practical help on the job or to further their knowledge of Electricity. Big 8 x 11 inch pages, handsomely bound in red and gold leatherette.

FREE—150 COYNE SHOP PRINTS

Just what every electrician needs! Wiring diagrams covering all types of electrical and radio jobs. Special—for a limited time—this big, valuable book FREE with Reference Set. Also FREE — 1 year Consultation Service by mail from the Coyne Staff. Act Now!

HUNDREDS OF SUBJECTS HUNDREDS OF PICTURES

Every field of Electricity explained and fully illustrated. Each subject indexed so you can quickly locate it. Includes:
Radio-Television
Refrigeration
Air Conditioning
Auto Electricity
Electric Signs
Talking Pictures
Diesel Engines

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., Dept. C3-K3
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Send me postpaid, the big 3-volume NEW EDITION Coyne Electrical and Radio Reference Encyclopedia, and 150 FREE Coyne Shop Prints. Within 7 days after receiving the books, I'll either return them or send you $1.95 and then $2 a month until the total price of $13.95 is paid.

FREE TRIAL COUPON

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

OCCUPATION.....AGE.....

SAVE 10%. Send cash price, $12.55, with order if preferred—you save $1.40. Same 7-day free trial and return privilege.

ahead of the others. Tohu, breathless and frightened.

"Nonomaka won," he panted. "But the old fellow fled before he realized it. The Pool began to heave again after the food was poured in. Quick! We three must escape!"

"And we thought that *we* had won," Tomara wailed.

"Look," Ames calmly replied, pointing out to sea. "Flight is an admission of guilt."

"You let him go, even though you thought you had won?"

"Yes. And letting him go has now saved our own lives." He turned to face the menacing circle of sharp spears and gleaming war-clubs which surrounded him and Tohu and Tomara.

"Look," he cried, again pointing out to sea. "Your priests are running away. They have given up the battle. They have deserted their gods, who had deserted them. The Pool is sick unto death, and when my ship returns in a month, we will utterly destroy it."

A deaths-head fly alighted on his chest just above the heart. The crowd recoiled, and stared expectantly. With a grin of triumph, Ames slapped it, and it crumpled lifeless to the ground.

The natives, as one man, fell on their faces before the mighty medicine-man of the Farani.

"WELL, that's about the end of the story," Ames concluded. "Captain Costa was set free, amid general rejoicing. Timidly a few natives tried the experiment of slapping a fly. When they found that there were no reprisals from the gods, there was a regular orgy of fly-killing. And when Mate Bettencourt returned with the *Mary B,* we carted a lot more tins of kerosene up into the hills, and put a final end to the Pool of Death. Then we sailed away.

"And what became of Tomara?" I asked.

A quizzical grin spread over the bronzed face of Jackson Ames, as he replied simply, "I brought her back to the States with me in the *Mary B.*"

I glanced over at his wife, to see how she was taking this.

She slid one slim hand into her husband's big paw. Her honey-colored eyes were deep wells of love and trust.

"Why not?" she challenged me. "Of course, it meant leaving my own people. But I'd follow Jack to the ends of the earth."

Black Secrets from Persia's Past!

● *A Valley Stronghold of Mystery and Murder!*

THE VALLEY OF THE ASSASSINS ●

A long novelette in the next issue of **WEIRD TALES**

by **EDMOND HAMILTON**

Robert Bloch Has More Nightmares

THE guy who took care of all those nightmares—Jory the werewolf, Mr. Simpkins the vampire, Gerymanx the centaur, Trina the mermaid, and so on—apparently has been on the job since last November (*Nursemaid to Nightmares,* November, 1942, issue) and doing well.

Robert Bloch, your editors, and more readers than we could shake a broomstick at became so fond of these particular nightmares that it was only a question of time before we took another trip back to Julius Margate's big mansion to see how things were going.

In *Black Barter,* the long novelette of this September number, you'll find Bloch's unusual collection of monsters cavorting around as of old . . . with some new, preposterous companions in tow.

On the story itself Author Robert Bloch has the following comments:

When I wrote *Nursemaid to Nightmares* last year I never realized it would stir up such a clamor among the readers. Some of the readers are still clamoring—for my life. But one or two are clamoring for a sequel.

I hope the story in this issue fills the bill. There really isn't much to say about the tale, save that it is practically all fictitious, and any resemblance to a plot is purely coincidental.

Comments pro and con are welcomed. But please remember—

I am not responsible for unsolicited criticisms, although every care will be taken in handling them while in my waste-basket.

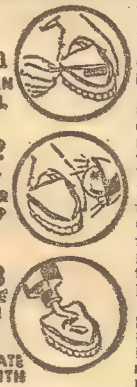
Contributors are advised to submit their criticisms on one side of the paper only, and to enclose return postage, checks, money or-

FREE OFFER for FALSE TEETH

TIGHTENS FALSE TEETH OR NO COST

Here's new amazing mouth comfort without risking a single cent . . . enjoy that feeling of having your own teeth again. Satisfy your desire for food . . . eat what you want. CROWN RELINER TIGHTENS FALSE TEETH OR NO COST. Perfect for ParHals, Lowers or Uppers.

JUST 3 STEPS



Don't suffer embarrassment and discomfort caused by loose dental plates. Apply CROWN RELINER. In a jiffy your plate fits like new and stays that way up to 4 months. No old-fashioned heating to burn your mouth. Just squeeze CROWN from tube and put your teeth back in. They'll fit as snugly as ever. Inventor is a recognized authority in dental field. A patent has been applied for CROWN RELINER to protect you from imitators. After you reline your plate with CROWN, take your false teeth out for cleaning without affecting the CROWN RELINER. CROWN RELINER is guaranteed . . . it's harmless. NOT A POWDER OR PASTE! Does Not Burn or Irritate. If not satisfied, even after 4 months, return partly used tube for full refund.

SEND NO MONEY

You must be one hundred per cent delighted or no cost. Try it for four months and return for full refund if not satisfied. Order at once and we'll include free with your order a tube of Crown's Dental Plate Cleaner. Rush coupon. Pay postman one dollar for combination plus postage, or send cash and we pay postage. Act now.

READ THIS:

J. Clements of Algonac writes: "My plates were so bad they rattled when I talked. Now I can eat steaks, corn on the cob." Reline your plates with CROWN. It's tasteless. Has that natural pink color. Order a tube of CROWN RELINER today.

CROWN PLASTICS CO.
Dept. 5008
4358 W. Philadelphia Ave.
Detroit, Mich.

Send your wonderful Crown Dental Plate Reliner and include the free Crown Dental Cleaner. I will pay postman one dollar plus postage on arrival. If I am not satisfied after four months, I may return partly used tube for full refund.

(☐ I am enclosing one dollar in full payment, same guarantee.)

Name .....

Address .....

GLASSES BY MAIL as low as $1.95
21 DAYS' TRIAL
MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE
SEND NO MONEY!
Improve your sight with stylish, good-looking Glasses at BIG SAVINGS! We GUARANTEE perfect fit, highest quality and expert workmanship. Just send name and address for FREE Catalogue of high-grade Glasses. Write today!
PRESCRIPTIONS EXPERTLY FILLED
BROKEN GLASSES REPAIRED PROMPT SERVICE
HOME SERVICE SPECTACLE CO.
1011 CHESTNUT ST., DEPT. 128, PHILA., PA.

VARICOSE ULCERS
"Nurse Dencker's Home Treatment," a palliative aid for relief of old leg sores caused by varicose veins. Does not interfere with daily work. FREE TRIAL. Send today.
DENCKER PRODUCTS, Dept. 51C, Long Beach, California

POEMS WANTED
For Musical Setting
Mother, Home, Love, Sacred, Patriotic, Comic or any subject. Don't Delay—Send us your Original Poem at once—for immediate examination and FREE Rhyming Dictionary.
RICHARD BROTHERS 27 WOODS BUILDING CHICAGO, ILL.

High School Course at Home
Many Finish in 2 Years
Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.
American School, Dept. HC-39, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

SPECIAL OFFER!
THE MOON TERROR
By A. G. Birch
Here is a stupendous weird scientific novel of Oriental intrigue. . . . A super sinister blueprint to gain control of the world!
And this smashing full length novel is not all; in addition there are three shorter stories, all by well known science fantasy authors.
Write Now—Enclosing Fifty Cents—To:
WEIRD TALES, Book Dept.,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y., U. S. A.
For Your Cloth Bound Copy Of The Moon Terror

ders, war bonds, or whatever else they can scrape together. Rush down to the corner and tear off the top of your neighborhood editor. Hurry—this contest closes yesterday! In case of ties, duplicate kicks in the face will be awarded. Decision of the judges will be futile.

At this point I'd like to take the opportunity to pass a few more remarks about my fellow scribes—but I hesitate. In my last EYRIE note I said that E. Hoffmann Price resembled a lawyer, and look what a fuss *that* created! Apparently I ruffled the feathers of this legal eagle, and hereby apologize profusely. I have no desire to meet Mr. Price in a pistol duel—although I am sure if we got into a brandy bout together, many shots would be exchanged.

So, hereafter, instead of sticking my neck out in describing fellow writers, I'd better stick to my own winsome and loveable self.

Robert Bloch.

Shapeless Things vs. Psychology

SEABURY QUINN is one of our favorite authors because he's varied—he sends us different sorts of stories, which any editor will tell you helps his make-up. About his *Louella Goes Home* in this issue, Quinn says:

What I think about Louella is that she is more of a fantasy, or to use a perfectly dear little word, a "whimsey." But don't get me wrong, please. I do think that I knew what I was doing when I created her and that I have the instinctive feel of what the WEIRD TALES readers will like. You see, I've been writing pretty steadily for W. T. for almost exactly twenty-three years. My first story appeared in the October, 1923, issue, and I've been pretty consistently represented ever since. I believe there is a place for stories that aren't what the feller would call weird, meaning horrible. You must go nearly bugs reading continuously of vampires, were-wolves, ghosts and indescribable, shapeless things slithering from amorphous pools of slime. A story based on psychology ought to be a positive relief after so much of the shock-*shock*-SHOCK school, I'm bound. And, speaking of dream stories, d'ye realize that DuMurier's Peter

Ibbetson is still a consistent seller—remember how Peter and his sweetheart used to "dream true"?

Plots lie under every unkicked-over stone in a writer's path, but you have to kick 'em over to find 'em.

There is probably no one who at one time or other has not come to some perfectly strange place, taken one look at it and suddenly had the uncanny, often frightening feeling of "I've been here before!"

Psychologists tell us this is due to inexact timing in our cognitions—those mental processes by which we become aware of objects in thought or perception—that one lobe of our brains is a sliced-second slower than the other in registering what we've seen—or perhaps heard—but that in that infinitesimally short span of time we have had the chance of deluding ourselves into assuming we are remembering some known scene rather than tardily "taking in" an absolutely new one.

However this may be, the not too uncommon experience of "remembering" strange places, tunes or faces has done much to convince humanity of the soundness of the theory of reincarnation, of "astral trips during sleep" and other more or less nebulous things not pertinent to the present discussion. Children and adolescents are especially gifted with this quality of false memory, and I can distinctly recall I often experienced it in childhood and, realizing I could not possibly have remembered something I had not seen before, explained the phenomenon to myself by saying, "I must have dreamed it."

This fairly common experience was the basis for *Louella Goes Home.*

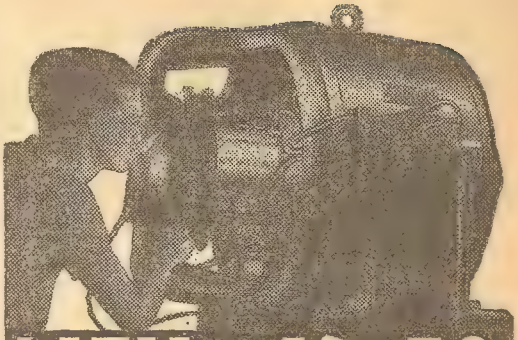
READERS' VOTE

BLACK BARTER	LOUELLA GOES HOME
THE GEEZENSTACKS	DEATH IN A GRAY MIST
BAYNTER'S IMP	HERBERT WEST: REANIMATOR
CURSED AWAKENING	WINGS OF DEATH
NIGHT MUST NOT COME	

Here's a list of ten stories in this issue. Won't you let us know which three you consider the best? Just place the numbers: 1, 2, and 3 respectively against your three favorite tales — then clip it out and mail it in to us.

WEIRD TALES

9 Rockefeller Plaza New York City



MEN whether you are 16 OR UP TO 50

PREPARE FOR A GOOD WAR-TIME JOB ...WITH A PEACE-TIME FUTURE!

Trained Electrical men are needed now. It's not how young you are, or how old you are. The question is Have **YOU** the training to hold a good war-time job today—and to insure your future after the war?

Learn ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS

ON REAL MOTORS, GENERATORS, ETC.

I'll Finance Your Training

Electricity is the mighty power behind our Victory Program. Men are needed **now** and as Electricity is essentially the same in war time as peace time Electricity offers a big future when the war is over. **"Learn by Doing" in 12 weeks.** You don't need much money—**I'll finance your training.**

"Learn-By-Doing"

Coyne training is EASY, PRACTICAL! Here you can train in 12 weeks—not by correspondence, but **on real actual electrical machinery and apparatus. You "Learn by Doing"** on real motors, generators, switchboards, and all types of practical electrical equipment. **Get your training first — then pay for it in easy monthly payments after your training period is over.** If you are short of money to pay for living expenses while you are in school, we'll get you a part-time job so you can **"earn while you learn".** After you graduate, we give you LIFETIME EMPLOYMENT SERVICE.

You don't need experience or advanced education. The Coyne **"LEARN-BY-DOING"** way makes it easy.

Get the Facts

This school is 44 years old—Coyne training is tested and proven. Mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne Book and my complete story about how I **help you get the training you need for a good-pay electrical job.** This does not obligate you. No salesmen will call. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

H. C. LEWIS, President

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. Paulina St. Dept. C3-66 Chicago, Ill.

H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. C3-66, Chicago, Ill.

Send me your Free Book and tell me about your plans to help me.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY STATE

Feel Old? Get New Pep
the Strong IRON WAY—with IRON, VITAMINS B_1 A and D!

Men, women who feel older than their years, who are constantly tired, pepless, nervous, irritable or suffer with minor aches, pains and frequent colds, here's good news! Thousands suffer needlessly because of lack of IRON and Vitamins! Now in one IRONITED VITAMIN TABLET taken daily you get IRON for building rich, red, strength-giving blood as well as popular Vitamins B_1, A and D. Try them! See if you don't feel better, years younger with more Pep, Vim and Energy than you thought possible. Send name and address on penny postcard for 3 weeks' supply. Pay postman only $1.00 plus few cents postage. Money back if not pleased.

IRONITED VITAMIN PRODUCTS CO.,
6605 Cottage Grove Ave., Dept. 71, Chicago, Illinois

(SIDELINE Salesmen and Agents)

Sell our Illustrated Comic Booklets, and other novelties. Each booklet size 4¼ by 2¾. Ten different sample booklets sent for 50¢ or 25 assorted for $1.00. Shipped prepaid. Wholesale novelty price list sent with order only. No C.O.D. orders. Send Cash or Stamps. Print name and address.
REPSAC SALES CO., 1 West 13th St., Dept. 3008, New York, N. Y.

CASH FOR YOUR SURPLUS UNUSED U. S. STAMPS
Mail Order Dealers: Collectors: We buy accumulations and surplus UNUSED U. S. Postage stamps at 90% face value for denominations ½c to 10c. 85% face value for denominations 20c to 50c. Small lots 85%. MAIL STAMPS REGISTERED. Money sent by return mail.
GARBER SERVICE, 72 Fifth Ave., Dept. 3008, New York City

DO YOU WANT TO STOP TOBACCO?

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men.

30 Years In Business
THE NEWELL COMPANY
600 Clayton Sta., St. Louis, Mo.

FREE BOOK

"Facts about EPILEPSY"

This most interesting and helpful Booklet will be mailed to anyone while the supply lasts. I will send a free copy to anyone who writes for it.

C. M. SIMPSON
Address Dept. F-15, 1840 W. 44th Street, Cleveland, Ohio

USED Correspondence Courses

Complete home-study courses and self-instruction books, slightly used. Sold, rented, exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Full details and 84-page illustrated bargain catalog FREE. Write today!
NELSON CO. 321 S. Wabash Dept. 226 Chicago

BIGGER PAY THAN EVER!

Local "Store Route" Plan pays men like you big money—steady!—in wholesale business of your own. No car necessary. Sell Vitamins to stores of all kinds. New low retail price, 7 for 10¢, opens vast rich field. Handle this sales-maker, plus 200 other quick profit items. Many nationally advertised. No experience needed. Amazing facts FREE. Write TODAY!
WORLD'S PRODUCTS CO.
Dept. 55-H Spencer, Indiana

INVENTORS

Take prompt steps to protect your invention. Delays are dangerous. Get new FREE book, "Protect, Finance and Sell Your Invention," and "Invention Record" form. Preliminary information *free*. Reasonable fees. Conscientious counsel. Easy payment plan. Learn how to protect and sell your invention. Write us today.
McMORROW & BERMAN
Registered Patent Attorneys
129-P Albee Building Washington, D. C.

WEIRD TALES CLUB

9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York N. Y.

WRITE TO MARTIN WARE, SECRETARY

- This is your club—a medium to help you get together with other fantasy and science-fiction fans. Readers wanted it—they wrote in telling us how much they would enjoy meeting others of similar tastes.
- Membership is very simple: just drop us a line, so that we can enroll you on the club roster, and publish your name and address in the magazine.
- A membership card carrying the above design—personal token of your fellowship with the weird and the fantastic—will be sent on request. (A stamped, addressed envelope should be enclosed.)

Presidential Habit

The writer has been a reader of WEIRD TALES for fifteen or more years (you might say, "So what!") and I wish to state that, with all the new "weird" or "unusual" story magazines that have appeared upon the newsmen's racks during that time, nothing has been able to compete with WEIRD TALES in reader interest or recreational value.

In a past issue I noticed your advice to Harriet Grossman of Poughkeepsie, N. Y., and thought it rather amusing, as I have that bad habit myself. . . . Reading in bed. . . . I got the idea years ago when I read that one of our greatest Presidents read himself to sleep each night with detective stories. His name is Theodore Roosevelt.

For pure relaxation . . . read WEIRD TALES!

P. C. Thompson

34 Myrtle Street, Medford, Mass.

Good Yesterday and Today—

I have been reading your magazine for quite a number of years now, and find myself just as well satisfied with it now as I was when I first started.

When your club notice caught my eye I resolved immediately to make myself one of the fast-growing band of fantasy readers, a band which is as truly international and cosmopolitan as any literary society in the world. . . .

Keats Williamson.

c/o SS. *Sloga*, Dominion Coal Co.,
Sydney, N. S., Canada.

Doesn't Miss Continued Stories

Please enroll me in your Weird Tales Club and send me a card.

I have been a captivated reader of your magazine for several years, and intend to so continue. I have a preference for a locale which matches the mood of the stories — hence my nomination of *The Man Who Amazed the Fish* as May No. 1; and in spite of it, of *Time and Again* as No. 2. But my abhorrences are few, include continued stories. I don't miss them.

I may even dash off a story for you myself. But I doubt it.

John F. Finke.

13 University Circle,
University, Va.

NEW MEMBERS

Ross Downey, 10 The Palisades, Swansea, Ont., Canada
Clifford Belcher, Kentville, N. S., Canada
Lloyd G. Taylor, Box 303, New Martinsville, W. Va.
Aldona V. Messarage, 2843 W. Pershing Rd., Chicago, Ill.
Vernon Cook, 316 First Ave., North, Great Falls, Montana
Robert R. Larsen, 1394 Masonic, San Francisco, Calif.
Leopold Gagne, Central Mill, Port Albani, B. C., Canada
Joe Thomas, 916 Oxford Ave., N. D. G., Montreal, Canada
Dr. Victor Gothaum, 334 Alabama Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Martin Thruman, 3207 West St. Paul Ave., Milwaukee, Wisc.
Vifquain W. Gillogly, 708 S. Spruce St., Villa Grove, Ill.
Paul Doerr, 193 E. State St., Sharon, Pa.
Mrs. Lena M. Evans Ganan, 5 E. 25th St., Mt. Hamilton, Ont., Canada
Martin Marger, 1711 Morris Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
Carl A. Mayo, 2029 Davis Avenue, Whiting, Ind.
Don Osborne, 504 Main St., Winnipeg. Canada.
Mrs. Juanita Ross, 1808 Ramirey St., Corpus Christi, Texas.
Albert Grauley, 437 Blumrich St., Grand Rapids, Mich.
Russell Briggs, R. F. D. 3, Whitefield, N. H.
Lawrence Weller, 5000 Broadway, New York, N. Y.
Alfred E. Maxwell, 700 East North St., Opelousas, La.
Preston M. Vaughn, Wonysham, Mo.
David Houghton, 621 East 9th St., Chester, Pa.
Lawrence Straw, 5872 North 38th St., Milwaukee, Wis.
Iris Smith, 924 Beckwith, Caruthersville, Mo.
Sydney R. Strober, 2121 82nd St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Dalvan Coger, 201 N. Blackstone, Jackson, Mich.
Robert de Gagne, Norman, Ont., Canada.
Howard Yeager, 251 Covert St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Floyd Young, Clinchfield Sta., Marion, N. C.
Harry Honig, 256 26th Ave., San Francisco, Calif.
Lynn Bainhart, 56½ East Broadway, Butte, Mont.
Norman Peterson, 64 Chodwick Ave., Hartford, Conn.
Miss Dee Bell, 106 W. Buckthorn St., Inglewood, Cal.
Stanley Rowe, 7 S. Kresson St., Baltimore, Md.
Richard C. Glennon, 1192 First Ave., New York, N. Y.
Bruce Beckham, Box 398, Yorktown, Texas.
W. A. Cather, 6063 Lawton Ave., Oakland, Calif.
Mildred Joseph, 791 James St., Hazelton, Pa.
Fred Petersen, 905 Chestnut St., Chester, Pa.
Robert W. Krepps, 3881 Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh, Pa.

We're sorry that lack of space prevents the inclusion of the names of all New Members. The rest will appear next time.

FREE Lesson in RADIO

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH RECEIVER SERVICING

PARTIAL LIST OF SUBJECTS

How superheterodyne receivers work
How to remove tubes, tube shields
Three reasons why Radio tubes fail
Electrodynamic loudspeaker
Output transformer repair
Gang tuning condenser
I.F. transformers—What they do, repair hints
How to locate defective soldered joints
Inside story of carbon resistors
Paper, electrolytic, mica, trimmer condensers
Antenna, oscillator coil facts
Power transformer: construction, possible troubles
Installing power cord
Tone controls
Dial lamp connections
Receiver servicing technique: Checking performance Testing tubes Circuit disturbance test
Isolating defective stage
Locating defective part

SEE FOR YOURSELF HOW PRACTICAL IT IS TO LEARN RADIO AT HOME

I want to mail a Sample Lesson to every man who doubts that he can become a Radio Technician or Operator — and every man who'd like to see for himself how I train beginners at home in spare time. Mail the Coupon below and I'll send the Lesson and my 64-page illustrated book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio" — both free!

More Radio Technicians Now Make $50 a Week Than Ever Before

There's a real shortage of trained Radio Technicians and Operators. The Radio repair business is booming. Broadcasting Stations, Aviation and Police Radio, and other communications branches are scrambling for trained Radio men.

The Government needs hundreds of Civilian and Enlisted Radio men. Radio factories are advertising for trained personnel. Then, think of the NEW jobs Television, Electronics and other Radio developments will open after the war!

Many Beginners Make $5, $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time

There's probably an opportunity right in your neighborhood to make money in spare time fixing Radios. I'll give you the training that started hundreds of N.R.I. students making $5, $10 a week extra within a few months after enrolling.

Get my FREE Lesson and 64-page book. They show how N.R.I. trains you at home, show letters from men I trained, describe fascinating jobs Radio offers. Just mail Coupon! J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 3HM, National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

EXTRA PAY IN ARMY, NAVY, TOO

Men likely to go into military service, soldiers, sailors, marines, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps Service men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duties, MUCH HIGHER PAY. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. Over 1,700 Service men now enrolled.

Chief Operator
"Before I completed your lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now Chief Operator." HOLLIS F. HAYES, 327 Madison St., Lapeer, Michigan.

Service Manager
"I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N.R.I. I am now Radio Service Manager for M—— Furniture Co. for their 4 stores." JAMES E. RYAN, 119 Pebble Court, Fall River, Mass.

GOOD FOR BOTH 64 PAGE BOOK SAMPLE LESSON FREE

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 3HM
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your Sample Lesson, "Getting Acquainted With Radio Receiver Servicing," and 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

AGE.....

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE.....4FB

"THIS WISDOM MUST DIE!"

Truths That Have Been Denied Struggling Humanity

FOR every word that has left the lips of bishops or statesmen to enlighten man, a thousand have been withheld. For every book publicly exposed to the inquiring mind, one hundred more have been suppressed—*damned to oblivion*. Each year of progress has been wilfully delayed centuries. Wisdom has had to filter through biased, secret sessions or ecclesiastical council meetings, where high dignitaries of state and church alone proclaimed what man should know.

Are you prepared to demand the hidden facts of life? Will you continue to believe that you are not capable of weighing the worth of knowledge that concerns your personal freedom and happiness? Realize that much that can make your life more *understandable* and *livable* has been left unexplained or intentionally destroyed. At first by word of mouth only, and *now* by private discourses, are *revealed* those truths which secret brotherhoods preserved in ancient temples and hidden sanctuaries, from those who sought to selfishly deprive humanity of them.

THIS *free* BOOK OF EXPLANATION

Let the Rosicrucians, one of these ancient brotherhoods of learning, tell you about these amazing truths, and explain how you, too, like thousands of others, may now use them to enjoy the fullness of life. The Rosicrucians, (not a religious organization) invite you to use the coupon opposite and receive the FREE copy of the fascinating, Sealed Book, with its startling tale of *self help*.

The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U. S. A.

Scribe F. O. M.
THE ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California, U.S.A.

Please send me your FREE Sealed Book. I am sincerely interested in learning how I may receive these long-concealed facts of life.

Name.....

Address.....

"NOW Show me the AUTO REPAIR JOB I can't DO!"

Here's proof you CAN do it:

FREE 7-DAY OFFER

used by U.S. Army

How MoToR's NEW FACTORY SHOP MANUAL Serves as Your Complete Repair, Tune-Up & Service Guide for Every Car Built Since 1935!

ANY expert mechanic can tell you that this is the ONE and ONLY book needed to know everything necessary to keep America's cars rolling today! Easy, step-by-step instructions anyone who can read can follow. Hundreds of photos, diagrams and drawings show exact how-to-do-it.

Packed full of short cuts, it saves time and money—even for the experts. *Try it at our risk, and see for yourself!*

It's a BIG BOOK, 8½ x 11 inches. More than 1000 illustrations; over 600 pages. Special water-proof binding. Lies open at any page for work-while-you-read. The only up-to-date book of its kind in all America!

Just Like 150 Official Shop Manuals—But All in One Book!

MoToR's FACTORY SHOP MANUAL contains all essential information from each manufacturer's own official shop procedure manual. Just look up the job, the model, the make, and go to work! Quick index gives you page and job instantly. Clear instructions, detailed pictures give you the "dope" you want *at once.* PARTIAL Contents here can only give you an idea of the jobs it covers!

Thousands Now in Use!

Used by the U. S. Armed Forces, trade, technical schools all over the country, auto servicemen in nearly every town.

Right now—to see how this book can help you get at each job *easier,* do it *better,* and finish it *faster*—send coupon below for a FREE 7-DAY TRIAL.

SEND NO MONEY

When the postman brings you the FACTORY SHOP MANUAL, try it out on a few extra-tough jobs. See how the book can *pay for itself* the first few days you use it! And unless thoroughly satisfied, return book in 7 days and pay nothing. Send coupon without money, TODAY! Address: **MoToR Book Dept., Desk 698, 572 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.**

Published by MoToR, The Leading Automotive Business Magazine. Where MoToR's manuals are used you are assured of high standards of service and repair work.

MoToR

Clear, Pictured, Job Facts on Every Car Built Since 1935!

Nearly 200,000 service and repair facts on all these makes:

American Bantam	Ford	Oldsmobile
Auburn	Graham	Overland
Austin	Hudson	Packard
Buick	Hupmobile	Pierce Arrow
Cadillac	Lafayette	Plymouth
Chevrolet	La Salle	Pontiac
Chrysler	Lincoln	Reo
Cord	Lincoln Zephyr	Studebaker
De Soto	Mercury	Terraplane
Dodge	Nash	Willys

604 pages; 60 pages of carburetor text, charts, illustrations, covering all models and automatic chokes.

Over 450 charts, tables covering important specifications, clearances, measurements, arranged in handy form, including: Tune-up Chart; Valve Measurements; Compression Pressure; Torque Wrench Reading; Starting Motor; Engine Clearance; Main & Rod Bearing Journal Dimensions; Generator; Clutch & Brake Specifications; Front End Measurements, etc.

Detailed, pictured instructions on Engines; Electric, Fuel, Cooling, Lubricating Systems; Transmissions; Wheels; Front Ends; Universals; Rear Ends, etc., etc.

Same FREE 7-Day Offer Applies on MoToR's New TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL!

Just published, for truck specialists, service stations, fleet owners—the first complete TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL, covering EVERY job on EVERY truck made since 1936! 1400 pictures, 905 pages, 300,000 facts based on truck manufacturers' own official manuals. Used by U. S. Armed Forces. Every essential fact you need to know to do ANY job. Strong, water-proof binding, size 8½ x 11.

Covers all models, 1936-1942. All Gasoline Engines; ALL DIESELS, Hesselmans, Diesel Fuel Injection Systems. All basic adjustment and repair procedures described in easily-understood text and pictures: *Fuel Systems, Governors, Lubrication Systems, Ignition Systems, Starters, Generators, Clutches, Transmissions, Front and Rear Axles, Torque Dividers, Transfer Cases, Brakes,* etc.

Offered to you on the same FREE 7-Day TRIAL offer. Just check box in coupon at right—and mail us coupon.

MAIL COUPON NOW FOR 7-DAY FREE TRIAL

MoToR BOOK DEPT., Desk 698, 572 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Rush to me at once: (check box opposite book you want).

☐ **MoToR's FACTORY SHOP MANUAL** If O.K., I will remit $1 in 7 days, and $1 monthly for 4 months, plus 35c delivery charge with final payment ($5.35 in all). Otherwise I will return book in 7 days. (Foreign price, $7 cash with order).

☐ **MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL** (Described at left in the box.) If O.K., I will remit $2 in 7 days, and $2 monthly for 3 months, plus 35c delivery charge with final payment ($8.35 in all). Otherwise I will return book in 7 days. (Foreign price, $11, cash with order).

Name_____ Address_____

City_____ State_____ Age_____

Employer_____ Occupation_____

☐ **SAVE 35c!** Check here if enclosing payment (check or money-order) WITH coupon. We will then pay 35c shipping costs. Same 7-day return privilege.

save for victory

WASTE NOT.. WANT NOT

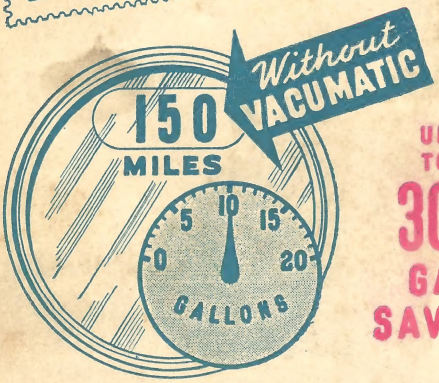
INSTALL A VACU-MATIC GAS SAVER

DON'T WASTE GASOLINE IT'S A WEAPON OF WAR

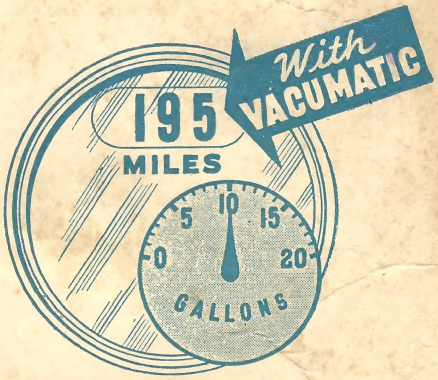
MOTORISTS *Wanted!*

TO MAKE THIS *UNIQUE TEST...*

of GAS SAVINGS



UP TO 30% GAS SAVINGS



Car Owners: You are invited to make a gas saving road test with the Vacu-matic on your own car, with the absolute understanding that unless it proves to you that it will save you up to 30% on gas and improve your car performance, the test will cost you nothing. Investigate this remarkable discovery that trims dollars off gasoline bills—gives you worthwhile gas savings—more power—quicker starting—more miles on less gas.

Automatic Supercharge Principle

Vacu-matic is *entirely different!* It operates on the supercharge principle by automatically adding a charge of extra oxygen, drawn free from the outer air, into the heart of the gas mixture. It is entirely automatic and allows the motor to "breathe" at the correct time, opening and closing *automatically* to save dollars on gas costs.

Proven By Test

In addition to establishing new mileage records on cars in all sections of the country, the Vacu-matic has proven itself on thousands of road tests and on dynamometer tests which duplicate road conditions and record accurate mileage and horse power increases.

Fits All Cars—Easy to Install

Vacu-matic is constructed of six parts assembled and fused into one unit, adjusted and *sealed at the factory.* Nothing to regulate. Any motorist can install in ten minutes. The free offer coupon will bring all the facts. Mail it today!

The Vacu-matic Co., Wauwatosa, Wis.

Sworn Proof of Gas Savings

This certifies that I have carefully read 300 original letters received from Vacu-matic users testifying to gas savings up to 30%, many reporting added power, smoother running, and quicker pick-up. These letters are just a small part of the larger file of enthusiastic user letters that I saw at the company offices.

Signed

Notary Public

AGENTS Get Yours FREE For Introducing

Vacu-matic offers a splendid opportunity for unusual sales and profits. Every car, truck, tractor, and motorcycle owner a prospect. Valuable territories now being assigned. If you help us introduce it to a friend, you can obtain your own free. Check and mail coupon today.

SEND THIS *FREE Offer* COUPON

THE VACU-MATIC COMPANY
7617-818 W. State St., Wauwatosa, Wis.

Please send full particulars about VACU-MATIC, also how I may obtain one for my own car FREE. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name .....

Address .....

City..... State.....

☐ Check here if interested in Agency Proposition.